UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE POLITICS OF BEAUTY IN LATE CAPITALISM

BY

THERESA SHEA ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta
FALL, 1997

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Acquisitions et services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-23070-8

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Theresa Shea

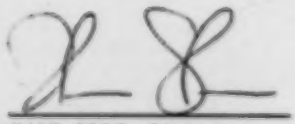
Title of Thesis: The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year this Degree Granted: 1997

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.



#407, 9925 - 91 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T6E 2T7

October 2, 1997

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE POLITICS OF BEAUTY IN LATE CAPITALISM submitted by THERESA SHEA in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Dr. Shirley Neuman, Supervisor

Dr. Jo-Ann Wallace

Dr. Susan Hamilton

Dr. Nasrin Rahimieh

Dr. Daphne Read

Dr. Christine St. Peter

September 26, 1997

ABSTRACT

The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism is an interdisciplinary project that engages with literature, film, feminist theory, and political economy to critique the capitalist promotion of an homogenized ideal that has engendered a variety of destructive beauty pursuits. Chapters on cosmetic surgery, bodybuilding, and eating disorders provide a materialist critique of the beauty, diet and fitness industries. I focus less on *why* people pursue dangerous and unhealthy beauty ideals, and more on *how*, within a capitalist system, they are encouraged to do so. My work, then, is situated in the space between the "before" and "after" transformation process, and thereby highlights the psychic anguish involved in the desire to achieve a culturally-prescribed physical ideal.

The central argument of this dissertation is that beauty pursuits, as they are increasingly linked to employment success, involve unpaid labour. Chapter one demonstrates that the missing referent in feminist discussions of cosmetic surgery is medical technology. Hence, my work switches the focus from an enquiry into individual agency to a critique of a profit-driven medical technology, in order to explore the links between medical technology, business, and health-care practitioners. Chapter two focuses on the sport of bodybuilding, and how its acceptance and promotion of capitalist modes of over-consumption are unprecedented. Chapter three provides an analysis of eating disorders and questions who profits from their proliferation and promotion. If capitalism encourages unrestrained consumption, symbolised by a fat body, why are we not living in a fat society, one that praises individuals who consume impulsively? This chapter explores how capitalism profits from the high failure rate of diets, and illustrates how eating disorders are profitable to capitalist modes of consumption.

Throughout the dissertation, I analyze examples of psychic anguish portrayed in contemporary literature and argue that literature provides a counter-discourse to destructive, hegemonic ideals of beauty. With an awareness of transnational capitalism operating as a framework, my study moves towards an understanding of how advertising, the fast food industry, food marketing, and medical technology have actively shaped our societal obsession with physical beauty.

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped to bring this project to fruition. My supervisor, Dr. Shirley Neuman, supplied a wealth of patience and intellectual stimulation. Her support certainly encouraged me to extend my theoretical arguments. I want also to thank Dr. Jo-Ann Wallace and Dr. Susan Hamilton for their continued interest in my work.

Funding from both the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and from the University of Alberta helped make this project possible. In addition, a special thanks to my first-year students. They fostered my love for teaching by making the classroom an exciting environment.

My family has always offered support, and I thank them for listening to both my complaints and my feelings of good fortune over the last ten years of education. For the intellectual conversations and emotional support offered at even my worst moments, I thank Norm Sacuta, Linda Warley, Deborah Wills, Vidya Netrakanti, Ann McKinnon, Jean Noble, Dan Coleman, Chris Wiesenthal, Susie O'Brien, Gerry Hill, and Astrid Blodgett. Finally, I thank Tim Bowling for the years of wonderful letters, conversations, insights, humour, kindness, and for his constant affection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword:	**The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism**	1
	Notes to Foreword	12
Introduction:	**From Lipstick to Liposuction**	13
	Body on Continuum	28
	The Gross Body	30
	Notes to Introduction	42
Chapter One:	**Beauty in a Surgical Age**	43
	History	47
	The Medical Complex	53
	Feminist Response	56
	Advertising and the Creation of a Patient Pool	57
	The Life and Loves of a She-Devil	60
	The Body Complex	70
	Orlan and the Slaughter-House of Beauty	77
	Counter-Arguments	84
	La Bâtarde	92
	Autobiography of a Face	98
	Notes to Chapter One	104
Chapter Two:	**No Pain No Gain: The Making of a Bodybuilder**	109
	Contemporary Bodies and Classical Ideals	111
	The Crisis of Masculinity	120
	Male Bodybuilders	124
	The Women	143
	Conclusion	157
	Notes to Chapter Two	159
Chapter Three:	**From Solution to Syndrome: Eating Disorders for Profit**	161
	Historical Representations	184
	Contemporary Interpretations	190
	Change in Food Production and the Growth of Fast Foods	200
	The Fat Body	207
	Men and Eating Disorders	219
	Conclusion	221
	Notes to Chapter Three	224
Conclusion:	**Late-Capitalism's Counter-Discourse**	227
	Notes to Conclusion	236
Works Cited		237

List of Illustrations

Figure 1	Liposuction Advertisement (*Texas Monthly* Magazine)	44
Figure 2	Male Enhancement Surgery (*Texas Monthly* Magazine)	114
Figure 3	The Inner Circle (*Muscle & Fitness* Magazine)	119

Foreword

The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism

The changing work environment in late capitalism (corporate downsizing, the relocation of workers, increased contract employment, etc.) provides a particularly ripe environment in which appearance operates as a key factor in gaining future employment, in embodying a competitive edge. There have been a number of feminist inquiries into female beauty pursuits, many of which provide invaluable, materialist critiques of capitalist modes of consumption.[1] However, unlike other feminist studies, *The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism*, in its attempts to identify and locate the psychic anguish involved in actively subscribing to homogenized beauty ideals, attributes the epidemic of "pathological"[2] body behaviours to capitalist industries that operate solely for profit. More importantly, however, my study identifies how consumption practices in late capitalism have changed from a focus on purchasing material goods, to a focus on buying services. This change illustrates a dramatic restructuring of capitalism in Western culture, for the population's growing preoccupation with bodily perfection feeds the need for capitalism's new growth industry: services.

Moreover, in addition to locating increased beauty pursuits within a changing work environment, I argue that cosmetic surgery, bodybuilding, and eating disorders constitute unpaid labour. Although women remain the primary consumers of such services and products, this study does not limit its discussion of beauty pursuits to women. It has been my belief, since initially imagining this project, that an exploration of how men are equally affected by detrimental and narrow beauty ideals would move the discussion away from

more traditional charges of female vanity or narcissism. Indeed, the growing numbers of men who undergo cosmetic surgery, who develop steroid addictions, and who suffer from eating disorders (an estimated one million in North America)[3] only confirms my belief that capitalism profits at great human expense.

The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism is an interdisciplinary project that engages with literature, film, advertising, and feminist theory to analyze how the capitalist promotion of an homogenized beauty ideal has led to a variety of destructive behaviours. In it, I provide a materialist critique of the beauty, diet, and fitness industries, and focus less on *why* people pursue dangerous and unhealthy physical ideals, and more on *how* they are encouraged to do so. I situate my work, then, in the space between the "before" and "after" transformation process, and thereby highlight the psychic anguish involved in the desire to achieve a culturally-prescribed body ideal. With a focus on transnational capitalism operating as a framework, my study investigates how advertising, the fast food industry, food marketing, and medical technology have contributed to our societal obsession with restrictive beauty ideals.

A focused study on beauty pursuits must recognize that transnational capitalism depends on the exploitation of both race and class. The global dissemination of an homogenized beauty ideal is based upon Caucasian standards of beauty that dominate in the popular media (television, movies, magazines). Moreover, hegemonic discourses of the body privilege particular groups--notably the white bourgeois--while they simultaneously subordinate groups of different ethnic and class backgrounds. The "norms" which equate the "light-skinned, Western look with beauty" (Davis, *Reshaping* 51-52) permeate both our

gender and race relations. In fact, because of technological "advancements," racial differences are more easily eradicated than ever before. The trend in cosmetic surgery for Asian's to "westernize" their eyes and for other ethnic markers to be erased (such as the "Jewish" nose) should make us question the relationship between medicalization and racism.

Although issues of race and class provide important insights into beauty pursuits, they are not foregrounded in my study. My interests lie more in analyzing the industries that profit from the promotion of an homogenized ideal. Certainly, race and class are a determining factor in understanding the degree to which beauty products and services are successful. But as one feminist scholar points out, too often every feminist project is expected to address *all* of the intersections that include issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. "[J]ust how many axes," she questions, "can one include and still preserve analytical focus or argument?" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 222). Because I am interested in a socioeconomic analysis, I highlight the economic structures in late capitalism that produce image systems and circulate ideologies of beauty. My primary focus, however, remains devoted to literary representations of psychic despair that result from the pursuit of physical ideals. Such a focus is by design, for my training as a literary scholar enables me to better investigate beauty concerns through a textual analysis. In addition, unlike film and advertising--two obvious sites of exploration--literature is not restricted to visual representation. Protagonists may be described as beautiful or plain, but readers are left some degree of freedom to imagine their own versions of characters' appearances. Because there are no fixed visual markers, the written text must illustrate through description and/or dialogue; it must represent the characters discursively, appealing to prevailing cultural ideas and/or stereotypes to elicit readers' sympathies or animosities. The relative degree of

freedom a reader has to imagine a character's appearance should not be underestimated. Unlike direct visual representation, wherein the character, played by an actor or model, appears "fully formed," so to speak, representations based solely on language incite greater acts of imagination on the parts of their readers.

By focusing more on an analysis of literary representations (over that of the visual media), I am not suggesting that literature inherently possesses a greater instructional or representational power than film, television, and/or advertising, or that literature better illustrates psychic anguish. I am, however, suggesting that literature has an instructional and representational power that is considerable and unique. In the words of Philippe Sollers, "the novel serves as the model by which society conceives of itself" (qtd in Culler 189). Such a statement accords literature a great persuasive weight. Similarly, in "Representation: A Performative Act," Wolfgang Iser provides a solid argument for why an engagement with discursive rather than visual texts is rewarding. According to Iser, literary criticism has wrongly equated the term "representation" with mimesis, as if representation is always about re-presenting or duplicating something that already exists. Jonathan Culler, for example, in *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*, speaks of fiction's "mimetic contract," which ensures readers that they can "interpret the text as about a real world" (193). But by equating fictional representation with purely mimetic potentials, Culler erases the possibility that fiction can create a world *outside* of the "real" one we inhabit. Such an erroneous equating conceals the "performative qualities through which the act of representation brings about something that hitherto did not exist as a given object" (Iser 217). For Iser, literature has the potential to go beyond the purely mimetic (the direct

rendering of an object or thing that already exists). Its power, then, stems largely from its ability to create worlds and situations that readers might not encounter in daily life.

James L. Battersby, in *Reason and the Nature of Texts*, also makes a claim for the representational power of literature. He writes:

> Most of our novels, dramas, narrative poems, as well as the majority of our lyric poems, for example, invite us to note clearly and then to consider carefully, apart from self-interest, what it would be like to think and feel in such and such a frame of mind and live in such and such circumstances. We are allowed to see vividly and to participate imaginatively in moral perplexities, in situations of moral choice and moral action, confronting those perplexities not as a system of ideas or as a corpus of theses or moral propositions, but as a complex of social, personal, emotional circumstances impinging on or otherwise affecting and affected by particular character. What we witness and are moved by are ethical possibilities of living. We are interested in what it would be like to live in them and live them out. (34)

His phrase "apart from self-interest" might be used to separate literature's discursive powers over advertising's appeal to individual self-interest. In arguing for literature's power to place us in situations where we are morally conflicted or ethically challenged, Battersby clearly privileges literature's representational powers. Representation, then, whether it be mimetic or performative (performing or creating what did not previously exist), gains its power from encouraging ethical engagements with new modes of living, new socioeconomic conditions.

In "History, Appropriation, and the Uses of Representation in Modern Narrative," Robert Weimann discusses textual representation as "the expression of a subject's relation to

the real" (177-78). In other words, representation can ask us to investigate our own relationship to "the real," as well as our relationship to ourselves. It encourages us to imagine ourselves in positions we might not otherwise experience. Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, for example, in its stark depictions of worker exploitation in the Chicago stockyards, situates "the worker" in a particular economic moment, prior to factory reform and the introduction of safety measures, that enables readers to at least formulate (or imagine) the experience of such profound exploitation.

Granted, not all realist works of fiction are critical of socioeconomic systems. However, my interest lies with how artistic representation changes in conjunction with alterations in the economic system. For example, in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey persuasively traces a trajectory of how representation simultaneously undergoes changes when socioeconomic systems are altered in order to re-present faults within capitalism and its many transformations. According to Harvey, representation underwent a fundamental transformation in the late nineteenth century, due in part to a growing lack of belief in the potential "benevolence" of capitalism (28-29). The resulting transformation in artistic modes of representation led to what is known today as the modernist period of expression, for the modernists "became preoccupied with language, with finding some special mode of representation of eternal truths" (20). Indeed, every period of artistic endeavours, Harvey argues, from the Medieval to the Renaissance, from Modernist to Post-modernist expression, has altered its modes of representation to counter stronger societal pressures for conformity or standardization.

Hence whether artists respond to the "blandness of the quality of life under a regime of standardized mass consumption" (Harvey 139), or to the overall homogenization of

images in a disposable society programmed for instant gratification, they must find or develop new modes of representation to critique and/or draw attention away from preoccupations of the status quo. After all, Harvey argues, artists "relate to events and issues around them, and construct ways of seeing and representing which have social meaning" (29). In its efforts "to please, to move, to teach, to change" (Attridge 2), literature challenges and invites us to re-read the world in a different light.

But the power of literature also stems from its ability to exist in the public domain. It works both inside and outside the institutional walls that promote it. As such, literature operates as a public discourse. As Derek Attridge argues in *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce*, literature *does* make a difference in how the world is viewed. He writes:

> writers have traditionally, and understandably, made a different claim for their work: that it speaks beyond the small circle of those with a professional commitment to literature, that it can engage with the language and the thoughts of everyone who speaks the same tongue, and that it attains thereby the power to intervene in the ethical and political life of a community or a nation. (1)

Put another way, literature has a broad reach and, as a consequence, it has the power to touch an audience that is not specifically linked to the discipline.

In contrast, then, to sociological, anthropological, and/or philosophical studies of physical embodiment, literature provides a site where material issues of the body can be engaged without necessarily being explained and/or analysed. By fictionalizing body concerns, authors raise and problematize culturally pertinent issues, without necessarily

solving them. Therefore, literature can act as an early warning system, precisely because artists sensitive to cultural nuances often fix their creative gazes at a level beyond the quotidian. If a novel such as George Orwell's *1984*, for example, foreshadows the dangers inherent in a technological society, and if Aldous Huxley's novel, *Brave New World*, imagines a future capitalism in which people are genetically programmed to consume, then what can we learn about the future of beauty pursuits in the pages of contemporary literature? What ethical questions might arise from an exploration of literary renderings of beauty concerns?

My emphasis throughout is on the ways that literature illuminates our cultural fixations with technology and the ways in which the technological and the biological have become inextricably linked. This double discourse of the technological and biological body informs my study. Hence my literary examples illustrate the extent to which society places great expectations on medical technology. Late capitalism's consumer culture has engendered an addiction to the purported *pleasure* of overcoming the physical body (its needs and functions) in favour of technological alterations. The literature I have chosen illustrates the psychic anguish involved in trying to overcome the physical body. Poems by Frank Bidart, Alison Calder, Louise Glück, and Eavan Boland clearly demonstrate the self-loathing of subjects with eating disorders, subjects who desire to abandon their bodies completely. Autobiographies by Samuel Fussell, Violette Leduc and Lucy Grealy provide further examples of how beauty is both desired and purchased, be it through bodybuilding (Fussell), cosmetic surgery (Leduc), or reconstructive surgery (Grealy). Similarly, novels by Margaret Atwood, Fay Weldon, Leon Rooke, and Hillary Johnson illustrate the psychic anguish and masochism involved with dieting and with wanting an ideal body. All of the

literary representations have protagonists/narrators struggling, in one way or another, to negotiate promises offered by technical/medical alternatives, and to come to some appreciation of the "real" (as opposed to the "ideal") body.

My study of the increased commodification of bodies and beauty, of the heightened body self-consciousness and self-loathing, of the amount of unpaid labour invested in beauty pursuits, and of the contemporary discourses of beauty that alienate subjects from their bodies, is divided into an introduction and three chapters. Each chapter foregrounds the psychic anguish involved in struggling to discipline the body and provides a critical analysis of the particular practices that are marketed as successful means of changing the body. To begin, the introduction analyses the transformation of political economy in late capitalism and investigates the attendant changing patterns of employment that foster a climate of body obsessions. Chapter one deals with cosmetic surgery, chapter two focuses on bodybuilding, and chapter three looks to eating disorders. The beauty, diet, and fitness industries all work on the axis of profit and desire to encourage consumers to "imagine the possibilities" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 39) of having new bodies. As the dramatic rise in cosmetic surgery suggests, no matter what the personal risk, it is worse being "ugly" in this society than being dead. The desire to be the perfect man or woman, the lengths to which the protagonists go to fulfill this desire, and the personal cost of that fulfilment are the themes that unite all of my primary texts.

Although literature makes up the primary examples of my discussion, I have also undertaken an analysis of some film, magazines, and advertising, as well as the work of a performance artist, Orlan. The unequal weight accorded to literature might suggest to readers that I privilege "high culture" over popular culture, and attribute the former with more

ideological import. Such a conclusion would be wrong, for no one kind of work is ideologically void of content, and no one kind of work (high or low) is a more transparent bearer of dominant ideologies than another. Nor do I want to propose, in an allegorical fashion, that once, before capitalism or contemporary beauty industries, we were somehow more "pure," whole, or integrated subjects. As literary works from previous periods attest, beauty concerns are not a twentieth-century phenomenon. While some of my literary examples are drawn from popular culture, and are therefore less recognized for their aesthetic quality, I hope that my reading and appreciation of these texts suggests that they do not exist in isolation but represent a general shift in literary consciousness to which more "serious" writers are becoming increasingly attuned.

A number of discipline-specific preoccupations subordinate artistic works to some larger theoretical insight or issue. However, I do not wish to join the ranks of literary critics who bypass a discussion of literature in order to produce metacriticism. Rather, I engage in a political reading of my primary texts to uncover the conditions of possibility that have brought about a culture obsessed with body preoccupations. In so doing, I illustrate how artists adopt new forms of representation to highlight the transformed production and consumption of commodities in late capitalism. Thus part of my research will appear as social science treatise, part as literary study. Again, this is by design, not by accident.

Finally, I'd like to add a word about style. I do not believe that complex ideas and concepts need to be further complicated by specialized diction. Clearly, there is a distinction to be made between accessibility and superficiality in terms of prose style. The former is an attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible, while the latter is merely evidence of a dearth of content and ideas. In *The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism*, I favour a direct

language because my subject matter affects more than a specialized audience. In the final analysis, I believe my investigation into beauty as unpaid labour, into men's increasing self-obsession at the level of the body, into investigating the direct link to capitalist quests for profit, and into offering literature as a viable counter-discourse to the tyranny of beauty pursuits, provides an original contribution to scholarly debates in this field. Undoubtedly, beauty has been the subject of a number of scholarly publications, but it has not yet been, to my knowledge, so firmly grounded in an extended study of a particular economic climate that equates competitiveness with appearance. The original contribution of this work, therefore, lies primarily in its identification of how late capitalism has created new patterns of employment that enable corporate industries to control and manipulate a beauty index related to employment.

Notes

1. More specifically, the work of Susan Bordo, Sandra Lee Bartky, Wendy Chapkis, Lois W. Banner, Rosalind Coward, and Robin Tolmach Lakoff and Raquel L. Scherr, to name a few, has been particularly illuminating.

2. By using the term pathological I am not suggesting that value judgements be placed on particular body modifications; rather, my intention is to specifically identify practices that enable the possibility of psychic anguish to be an issue.

3. See the introduction of Peggy Claude-Pierre's *The Secret Language of Eating Disorders* (xii).

Introduction

From Lipstick to Liposuction

Trimming to the bone, downsizing, shedding excess baggage, becoming lean and mean--it is no surprise that deficit rhetoric employs such aggressive terms clearly linked to anxieties about the body. Fiscal restraint is not a new phenomenon; however, the rhetoric of "tightening the belt" on spending has never before been so closely tied to individual fitness pursuits. While it is difficult to identify whether the corporate world draws on the contemporary fervour of the diet and fitness industry in its rhetoric, or whether these industries adopt the stringent "downsizing" rhetoric that reflects economic anxieties, current economic catch-phrases definitely draw a moral impetus from our fixations with physical perfection. Indeed, whether the focus rests on the social (political) body, or the individual (physical) body, the language of late capitalism illustrates its obsession with size. The term "downsizing," for example, suggests a corporate anorexia that is *desirable*, as though becoming emaciated is akin to being fiscally responsible. Who, after all, does not believe that a lean body is a healthy body? To argue over what came first (deficit rhetoric or dieting rhetoric), or to suggest one borrows more heavily from the other, is to miss the salient point that the body in late capitalism exists in conjunction with two ideological paradoxes: on the one hand, we are to be both fiscally *and* physically responsible, while on the other hand, in order to be physically fit, we are encouraged to spend money. These two impulses, contradictory in nature, encourage contemporary cultural obsessions with both physical and fiscal accountability.

There is nothing unusual in such a linking of political economy and physiology. Mary Douglas's 1966 anthropological study, for example, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo,* demonstrates the extent to which the physical body mirrors the social body and reflects socio-economic vulnerabilities in the flesh. What the deficit rhetoric suggests, in its adaptation and/or deployment of dieting discourses and anxieties about the body, is that the individual body (the microcosm) and the political body (the macrocosm) are inextricably linked. The war on fat and flabby constitutions demonstrates the ideological paradox at the heart of the association between the political and the personal body. Indeed, body obsessions and the microscopic focus on the self may be read as "natural" responses to an economic climate that rewards militant programs of fiscal accountability.[1] These "natural" responses may also be read as warning systems of a dramatic change in how the body is under assault in late capitalism.

"If there has been some kind of transformation in the political economy of late twentieth-century capitalism," David Harvey writes in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, "then it behoves us to establish how deep and fundamental the change might be" (121). While there are many avenues such an exploration of contemporary political economy might take, my interest lies in identifying how changes in labour practices have produced an environment that fosters a heightened attention to appearance. Indeed, changes in labour practices have instituted concomitant changes in consumer habits, and have also socialized workers to accept new conditions of capitalist production. This "socialization" takes place, Harvey argues, by gaining control of the "physical and mental powers" of workers on a broad scale (123). More specifically, through the "mobilization of certain social sentiments" (123), shifting work ideologies become accepted by those who do the work. Thus in an

economic climate saturated with deficit rhetoric and plagued by constant reports of corporate downsizing, competing for jobs plays itself out on the body.

Social theorists predicting employment practices of late capitalism often missed the mark. For example, in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (1973), Daniel Bell spends more time identifying the changes from one mode of production to another than "forecasting" the possibilities of a large employment crisis directly related to capitalism's drive towards globalization. Instead, he charts the trajectory of industrialization and defines the difference between an industrial society (organized around the axis of production and machinery for the fabrication of goods) and what he calls our present post-industrial society (based on services). According to Bell, a post-industrial society is one in which "the majority of the labor force is no longer engaged in agriculture or manufacturing but in services" (15). In his view, just as industrial society replaced agrarian society, so a post-industrial society develops as a result of the economic drive towards the provision of services. For Bell, this development is a natural process--another step in society's evolution. Such restructuring results in a large portion of the workforce being engaged in the distribution of information rather than in the production of goods (the actual making of commodities). Bell categorizes information jobs as those in "trade, finance, transport, health, recreation, education and government" (15). However, his taxonomy does not allow a comparison between manufacturing and service jobs, nor does it pay special attention to the negative consequences of such an economic transition and what it means for workers.

As a result of his narrow outlook, Bell claims that "capital and labor are the main structural features of industrial society," whereas "information and knowledge are those of

the post-industrial society" (xiii). However, in *Ludic Feminism and After: Postmodernism, Desire, and Labor in Late Capitalism*, Teresa Ebert critiques Bell's "neoconservative" views "for displacing the economic and suppressing Marx's theory of the mode of production and labor value" (105). Capital and labour drop out of Bell's post-industrial schema, and are replaced by information and knowledge, as if the two terms are directly analogous. But as Alex Callinicos argues, in *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*, "The fact that fewer people are employed in material production does not in any case alter the fact that no one can survive without the industrial goods manufactured by these people" (127). In other words, the living standard enjoyed by a large population of North Americans remains vitally dependent upon the *labour* of others. That fewer people are employed in manufacturing sectors is not adequately addressed by Bell, who embraces the technological advances of the new world order. As Mark Seltzer argues in *Bodies and Machines*, Bell erases the tensions in capitalism by converting them into a familiar narrative of "transformation from simplicity to luxury" (60). Indeed, Bell's 1973 study did not forecast mass unemployment, lay-offs, the loss of millions of well-paying jobs, or the development of a new class of working poor.

It is perhaps unfair, then, for Callinicos, writing sixteen years after Bell's predictions, to critique Bell's many omissions, for hindsight provides an unfair advantage. Nevertheless, Callinicos is right to point out that employment in the service industry is far from ideal, for their wages "are 40 to 50 percent lower than in basic manufacturing" (125). In other words, changes to employment have *eradicated* many jobs that offered workers high wages, relative security, and good benefits. To ignore the basic economic hardship that often accompanies working for minimum wage, and to turn a blind eye to the attendant lack of union protection available to workers, is to support the myth that work is available to all who actively seek it.

In contrast to Bell's optimism, Jeremy Rifkin, in *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, provides some unsettling statistics about job losses in the United States due to the introduction of new technologies. AT&T, for example, has replaced "more than 6,000 long-distance operators with computerized voice-recognition technology" (141). The postal service has replaced "more than 47,000 workers...with automated machines capable of sight recognition" (142). Similarly, the introduction of automated tellers has severely reduced banking payrolls. "Between 1983 and 1993, banks eliminated 179,000 human tellers, or 37 percent of their workforce, replacing them with automated teller machines. By the year 2000," Rifkin predicts, "upwards of 90 percent of banking customers will use automated teller machines" (144). Although these statistics focus primarily on damage to the work force in the United States, we are witnessing a similar restructuring in Canada.

Large lay-offs such as the above (to name only a few) have increased both corporate "productivity" and unemployment rates. Rifkin argues that today's unemployed workers are "casualties of the Third Industrial Revolution," a revolution identified by the replacement of human labour with "more efficient and profitable machine surrogates" (286-287). As global corporate power increases, employment for workers is not the issue--profit is. Under the increased threat of unemployment in late capitalism, competition for jobs is fierce, and workers appear willing to go to any lengths to improve their employment opportunities (such as having a facelift to increase employment marketability). The objective of the global campaign is to attain the freedom to produce anywhere, to sell everywhere, and to keep corporate taxes low by threatening to move jobs out of any country that tries to increase wages. Such a system does not measure its success by the well-being of its workers, but

rather by bottom-line profit. High unemployment creates an environment in which workers are made to feel "lucky" that they have work, which in turn condones the payment of low wages. Within such a desperate economy, beauty pursuits as unpaid labour appear as a "natural" extension of work (a necessary correlative).

In critiquing Bell's vision of what constitutes a post-industrial society, and in attempting to further my argument that capitalist restructuring of labour has created a particularly ripe environment in which appearance is vitally important, I draw particular attention to the replacement of full-time workers with part-time and contract workers who earn significantly less than their full-time counterparts. As the editors of *Beyond Survival: Wage Labor in the Twentieth-Century* argue,

> The transnationalization of capital as a social relation has had a devastating effect on the value of labor power. The forces of capital accumulation and global competition are driving the majority of the world's population into abject poverty....Thirty percent of the global labor force is either unemployed or underemployed, and there is growing labor market inequality. (Bina et al 3-4).

More recent analyses of work relations under late capitalism such as the above, as well as critiques by social theorists such as Callinicos and Rifkin, decidedly lack the optimism of Bell's earlier predictions.

Flawed as his study is, what I find particularly useful in Bell's analysis of contemporary work relations is his statement that a society based on services "is a game between persons" (127). Put another way, an information-era entails the exchange of information from one person to another, one company to another. If we apply this "game

between persons" to the growing service and entertainment industries (retailers, fast-food outlets, restaurants, nightclubs etc., as opposed to service jobs such as trade, education, banking, etc.), a discussion of beauty becomes well-grounded. For beauty in the service industry (and in *all* employment areas) offers a form of upward mobility sometimes allied with, but often divorced from, skill or past achievements. Unlike services such as trade, health, etc.--jobs with technical or educational components--the service industry generally employs "unskilled" labour and pays minimum wage. In jobs where education or technical skills are not required, employers rarely judge individuals by the amount of secondary education they might have, or even on past job experience. On the contrary, employees are more likely to be judged by their appearance. As such, beauty becomes the primary job requirement.

The profound awareness of beauty and its link to potential employment is not confined to the service industry. Late capitalism brings with it new patterns of employment. As Donald Lowe points out in *The Body in Late Capitalist USA*, "A core of primary jobs with full-time, permanent status, central to the long-term future of the corporate organization, is shrinking" (23). Other groups of workers, such as clerical, secretarial and lesser skilled staff, along with less secure and part-time or temporary contract workers, increasingly find themselves in a large pool of cheaply available labour. A falling gross domestic product in the last two decades, in conjunction with the explosion of national debt in the 1980s (Lowe 17-18), has contributed to produce this pool of surplus labour. Moreover, the significant number of jobs lost to corporate downsizing has engendered a new rhetoric that focuses on a competitive edge largely based on appearance. Within such an appearance-

focused climate, cosmetic surgery for both men and women can be marketed as a means to enhance job performance and to increase market competitiveness.[2]

A number of economic developments occurred to bring about a postmodern condition that links success with beauty. In his study of postmodernity, Harvey draws attention to two particularly important developments in the arena of consumption: "the mobilization of fashion in mass (as opposed to elite) markets," and the "shift away from the consumption of goods and into the consumption of services" (285). The former provides a means "to accelerate the pace of consumption," while the latter trend marks a shift towards the commodification of services--"not only personal, business, educational, and health services, but also into entertainments, spectacles, happenings, and distractions" (285). These new consumptive practices, Harvey argues, are the result of changing market forces. "If there are limits to the accumulation and turnover of physical goods," he suggests, "then it makes sense for capitalists to turn to the provision of very ephemeral services in consumption" (285). In other words, the market for physical goods has been glutted, but there remains a large market for the consumption of ephemeral goods (services). One method by which the more "ephemeral" services are marketed is by emphasizing "the values and virtues of instantaneity (instant and fast foods, meals, and other satisfactions) and disposability" (Harvey 286). The market changes that favour instantaneity and disposability fuel the consumptive demands of late capitalism, and they also encourage a consumer belief in instant gratification. The beauty, diet, and fitness industries exploit this climate of instantaneity for their own gains and focus much of their rhetoric upon the "instant" results that can be achieved from purchasing beauty products.

Many parallels can be drawn between Harvey's assessment of modernism's preoccupation with representation in an "international" world (262), and postmodernism's preoccupation with bodies in a global world. A new important aspect to the postmodern condition is "the construction of new sign systems and imagery" (Harvey 287) largely based on market volatility. Short-term gains instead of long-term projections feed the instant gratification syndrome produced by late capitalism. Appearance plays a role because the "postmodern conversation" involves acting now and thinking later. Moreover, because competition for jobs of all varieties (from upper-management to service industry jobs) has increased, presenting the proper "image" is vitally important. As Harvey maintains, "The acquisition of an image (by the purchase of a sign system such as designer clothes and the right car) becomes a singularly important element in the presentation of self in labour markets" (288). In short, he continues, the "image serves to establish an identity in the market place" (288).

As a consequence of the importance of image in labour markets, image consulting has become one of the biggest growth industries in North America. Harvey contends that up to "a million or so people a year" in New York city alone "sign up for courses with firms called Image Assemblers, Image Builders, Image Crafters and Image Creators" (288). Such a growth in image consulting indicates how "image" can be commodified to incorporate capitalism's move to an economy stimulated by a growth in services. Indeed, it is now feasible "for accumulation to proceed at least in part on the basis of pure image production and marketing" (Harvey 289). In other words, late capitalism has transmogrified to accommodate a heightened competitiveness brought on by the drive towards globalization.

To repeat my central argument, I believe that transformations in current labour practices in North America have created a large surplus labour pool which enables an emphasis on appearance to have particular importance. "The threat of unemployment," Lowe maintains, ultimately "disciplines the labor force" (27). Hence, even those who resist pursuing an homogenized beauty ideal recognize the importance of appearance at all levels of employment. The beauty, diet, and fitness industries offer the "ephemeral" services. Driven by capitalist profit-seeking concerns, they have not only risen to meet the "needs" of an increasingly appearance-obsessed society, they have also actively encouraged an environment that promotes bodily self-hatred.

By encouraging individuals to find fault with their bodies, these industries have reaped, and continue to enjoy, huge profits. As I outline more fully in my chapter on eating disorders, the beauty, diet, and fitness industries are large corporate powers. Therefore, they have a say in determining the new labour force required by late capitalism (one more suited to temporary and contract work), and they have the opportunity to manipulate and control the beauty index. Not surprisingly, strict and narrow beauty ideologies have accompanied the vast economic changes in consumer society. Bodies are not solely used for the sake of their labour power, but for the sake of their sales power--their ability to create sufficient envy in customers. The consumption required to gain/maintain a fit/beautiful body requires that an individual purchase commodities. Membership sales at weight loss clinics and fitness centres, along with the acquisition of products such as diet foods and beverages, diet pills, and cosmetic surgery, comprise just a small amount of profits made by the beauty industry.

In determining the implications of new labour practices, there is always, as Harvey suggests, "a danger of confusing the transitory and the ephemeral with more fundamental

transformations in political-economic life" (124). Some critics might argue that beauty concerns are in fact "transitory and ephemeral" elements of our current socio-political fabric, and are therefore unlinked to fundamental economic patterns. I would argue, by contrast, that contemporary practices in the beauty, diet, and fitness industries show the degree to which corporate power regulates the workforce. For if appearance is increasingly important to gaining and/or maintaining employment, who stands most to gain from the time, money, and energy individuals spend on body modifications? That beauty pursuits take place outside of working hours, during "free time" (even though they are now integral to employment prospects), make them a form of unpaid labour. By unpaid labour I mean the time and energy spent on body modifications, all of which is not directly remunerated. As Susan Bordo argues in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, "People *know* the routes to success in this culture--they are advertised widely enough--and they are not 'dopes' to pursue them. Often, given the racism, sexism, and narcissism of the culture, their personal happiness and economic security may depend on it" (30). We live in a capitalist economy that functions with profit as its main goal. There is little profit in encouraging people to accept their bodies, but there is big profit in enticing people to change them.

Throughout this study, I use the term "late capitalism" to signify the postmodern and transnational capitalist economy of North America. As Frederic Jameson argues in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, transnational capitalism, like postmodernism, "is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order...but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself" (xii). The term "late capitalism," then, unlike Bell's post-industrialism which semantically marks a break or rupture in industrialism, conveys a significant change, indicating that "we have

gone through a transformation of the life world which is somehow decisive but incomparable with the old convulsions of modernization and industrialization" (Jameson xxi). Jameson argues further that the fundamental ideological task of postmodernism or late capitalism "must remain that of coordinating new forms of practice and social and mental habits...with the new forms of economic production and organization--the new global division of labor--in recent years" (xiv). In referring to a powerful passage by Marx, Jameson argues that in order to overcome our present socioeconomic crisis, we need to think of capitalism dialectically as both the best and worst thing that has happened to us. We must, he continues, think of late capitalism as "catastrophe and progress all together" (47).

Some features of late capitalism include the global division of labour (locating the majority of production in advanced Third World countries), new methods of international banking, technological advances in computerization and automation, the consumer's growing dependence on instant credit, and the steady erosion of the middle class in North America. The politics of beauty in late capitalism has also undergone vast changes, especially the increased commodification of beauty for profit and an even more pervasive association of beauty with youth. Since the early 1970s in particular (following the dynamics of a 'throwaway' society evident during the 1960s), the beauty, diet, and fitness industries have encouraged individuals to believe in "freedom from bodily determination" (Bordo 245). To create a climate in which people are dissatisfied with their bodies, a pervasive rhetoric of discontent must be deployed. My term for the discourses that encourage us to place our bodies under scrutiny, and to discount the possible side-effects of the resulting self-obsession, is the rhetoric of reformation.

The rhetoric of reformation tells us that we can look better, that it is our decision, that we owe it to ourselves, that we should make the most of us, that we can afford it, that we will be happier when, that we will be more successful in relationships, that we will be more competitive in the job market, that we will look the age we feel, that the suffering will be over, that we will have the body we were always meant to have. One of the reasons people so readily buy into the rhetoric of reformation is that some of its promises are true. What are the implications of these kept promises? We all *know* that to look "good" increases our chances of success, but when the discourses of looking "good" eventually involve the medicalization of the body, "beauty" moves farther away from the individual, and into the realm of the institutional. Generally, you do not fix something unless you think it is broken, and the rhetoric of reformation, by constantly reforming and changing, suggests that the body is always already broken.

Bordo's *Unbearable Weight* provides an excellent study of postmodern discourses that encourage individuals to flirt with the notion of altering their bodies. She highlights a discourse that is "gradually changing our conception and experience of our bodies, [one] that encourages us 'to imagine the possibilities' and close our eyes to limits and consequences" (39). Some of the "limits and consequences" that people close their eyes to in their obsessive pursuit of beauty result in eating disorders, compulsive exercising, a growing dependence on cosmetic surgery, and steroid abuse in bodybuilding, to name just a few. The beauty, diet, and fitness industries all use this discourse of possibility, or the rhetoric of reformation, to encourage their customers to desire a physical transformation. While there exists an abundance of images of finished products always in sight--be they represented in magazine photos, by the aerobics instructor etc.--the *process* of transformation is rarely shown.

"Before" and "after" pictures display the results, but the pain and suffering involved in producing a finished product is eradicated. To ignore the period of transformation between the "before" and "after" is to ignore that bodies suffer, psychically and physically, in this transformation process.

Therefore, I situate my analysis of the pursuit of beauty in the space between the "before" and "after." In so doing, I hope to present a counter-discourse to the rhetoric of reformation. This counter-discourse might be called the discourse of desperation or despair. The discourse of desperation unveils the hours spent in the gym, and the dependence on the scale for self-esteem. It calculates the economic costs of joining new weight-loss programs or fitness centres or having surgical alterations. It looks to the time spent counting calories, buying the "proper" food, and obsessively willing the body to change. It reveals the bleeding, bruising, swelling and potential complications of cosmetic surgery. The discourse of desperation chronicles the dieter's despair when the scale shows the slightest weight-gain, and talks of the psychic anguish of the bulimic, who alternately consumes and purges, locked in a cycle of desire, disgust, and despair. It literalizes the anorexic's awareness that the body will *never* be what she wants it to be. It discloses that to be a professional bodybuilder is to abuse steroids, and it describes the side-effects of this drug. It calculates the vast amount of unpaid labour that goes into perfecting the body. But most of all, the discourse of desperation details the anguish and suffering of the constant war with the body, a body locked into a discourse of desire at odds with its biological reality.

The relentless call for self-improvement encouraged by the rhetoric of reformation completely masks the potential self-destructiveness of beauty pursuits. In *The Hunger Artist: Starving, Writing & Imprisonment*, Maud Ellman argues that "the rhetoric of self-

improvement in America conceals an underlying drive to self-destruction" (10). With its constant call for change, this rhetoric declares that you are never good enough the way you are. Indeed, within contemporary Western constructions of beauty there *are* dominant and normalizing ideals with which to contend. "To struggle effectively against the coerciveness of those forms," Bordo states, "it is first necessary to recognize that they *have* dominance, and not to efface such recognition through a facile and abstract celebration of 'heterogeneity,' 'difference,' 'subversive reading,' and so forth" (*Unbearable* 29-30). We all know what this ideal is; beauty ideals for both men and women are most widely represented by mass media movie and television stars as well as by models, and this homogenized ideal gains power by being widely distributed through the mass media--television, films, advertising, etc. The racism inherent in these ideals is apparent: they are based on white standards that privilege attributes such as silken hair, blue eyes, high cheekbones, and angular noses. Even when "ethnic" beauty receives attention, the women of colour still embody the traditionally slender physique valued in Western culture.

To better comprehend how the firm grip of an homogenized ideal has evolved, I want first to situate the pursuit of beauty within an analysis of capitalist exploitation of labour. The labour that goes into the production of this body (aerobics, cosmetic surgery, diets, hair-colouring, etc.) responds to the individual's need of employment. In other words, the unpaid labour (the time and energy spent on body modifications) is *useful* to her in that she remains competitive (i.e. employable). The exchange value of a commodity is simply the amount it will exchange for other commodities; within this schema the body as commodity exchanges its appearance (a homogenized beauty ideal that symbolizes the proper management of desires) for employment.

Unpaid labour in beauty pursuits includes the money spent joining fitness clubs and weight loss clinics, and the time spent using them. It includes the time spent working out in the gym, the recovery time from cosmetic surgery, the costs of steroids, and the time spent shopping for services, etc. In short, unpaid labour includes all the time and money spent supporting the beauty, diet and fitness industries. For if, as Lowe argues, unemployment is the great threat held against workers, then all forms of beauty pursuits must be critiqued with the desire for gainful employment in mind. By emphasizing the unpaid labour of beauty, I want to swing the investigative spotlight *away* from the individual and a discussion of personal agency (a popular critical practice), and fix it instead on the industries that profit *because* of the built-in failure rate of diets and other transformative processes. What, we must ask, is the social use of this form of unpaid labour?

Body on Continuum

I see the body as a locus of negotiation on a continuum between biological constraints and cultural demands. On this continuum the body can operate as both a site for invasion and inscription, and as a site of resistance and armament. I want to emphasize, however, that there are degrees of submission on this continuum. For example, while control-top pantyhose and tummy-tucks or abdominal liposuction might give the *appearance* of the same results, the economic, physical, and emotional repercussions vary. There is a significant difference between purchasing control-top pantyhose and undergoing an operation, or between purchasing so-called anti-aging cream and having a facelift. The most obvious difference is that one procedure is external, while the other is invasive and internal. Furthermore, one product can be purchased in a store, while the other must be bought from a

clinic; one can be administered with full bodily sensations, while the other requires the use of anaesthesia. One is relatively affordable, while the other is more expensive. And the list goes on.

But what are some of the less obvious differences and their implications? On a more subtle level the artificial is being made to appear "biological," internal alterations and other invasive techniques are being made to appear ordinary. Concomitantly, there is a complete absence of a competing discourse that encourages women to accept the aging process gracefully. Whether a woman uses anti-aging cream or has a facelift, the goal is always the same: to retard the aging process. Another implication of the increased medicalization of bodies is a growing intolerance of the untechnologized body. As technologies to improve the body become more commonplace, *not* to have the body altered will be an increasingly difficult decision. Contrary to popular belief, technologies to alter the body are most often sought by people who are already considered to be relatively "normal" in appearance. As Bordo notes, in 1989, "over half" of the cosmetic surgery procedures "were performed on patients between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five" (*Unbearable* 246).

Medicine and beauty, drugs and beauty, risking death for beauty. Why do these pairings not seem incongruous? I ask this in order to highlight the difficulties of engaging in work focused on the pursuit of beauty. To begin, where do we draw the line? At what point does body contouring become unacceptable and why? What is the difference between a person having braces put on her teeth to improve her smile and a woman having breast implants or liposuction? What is "natural" about having ears pierced, and hair dyed or permed? Are the ideologies that promote external alterations any different from those that promote the more invasive alterations that involve medical intervention? April Fallon

engages with this difficulty in "Culture in the Mirror: Sociocultural Determinants of Body Image" when she asks, "Who can say whether scarring one's face is elegant or hideous or whether stretching one's lips with discs or implanting one's breasts with silicone is an aesthetic improvement or a horrific mutilation?" (84). But in order to resist the profit-driven beauty industry, someone has to take a stand.

We need to question, for instance, the inherent dangers of having medical procedures so closely aligned with beauty and fashion. What does this do to our perceived defects of our bodies? Does it make us and our bodies "sick"? Does the naturally aging breast become deformed under the gaze of the cosmetic surgeon? Or under our own gaze? Are such body alterations liberating, or are we becoming even more psychically obsessed and ideologically controlled?

The Gross Body

In this study I do not privilege a "natural" body that is pure and unsullied over a technologized body, a body that has undergone technological intervention in the pursuit of a cultural ideal of beauty.[3] Technological intervention involves artificial means of alteration such as cosmetic surgery, the use of steroids, appetite suppressants, laxatives etc. Again, it is best to situate the concept of the technologized body on a continuum--from lipstick to liposuction, as it were--to help define the technologized body. This is a difficult category to determine, but I think the distinction is worth making in order to ascertain the degree to which bodies are increasingly commodified and technologized. For example, for people with crooked or protruding teeth, orthodontics is seen as a necessity in North America. Those whose economic status bars them from obtaining the services of a skilled orthodontist will be

excluded from the category of "beauty" because having straight teeth is one of beauty's requirements. My aim in identifying body interventions is not to argue that one procedure is better than another, nor is it to condemn those who "choose" more drastic means of attaining beauty. I do not want to foreground the procedures--although they *are* fascinating--but rather the *degree* of submission to technology and the increased *acceptance* of more radical and life-threatening techniques in the pursuit of beauty.

As stated earlier, I see the body as a locus of negotiation between biological constraints and cultural demands, recognizing that there are degrees of submission to cultural ideals on this continuum. The "reality" of having crooked teeth and the cultural demand to have them straightened is just one example of the negotiations that must take place, from an economic, emotional and physical standpoint. Whereas once it might have been only the smile that sent people in search of professional help, the increased commodification of bodies has brought about an entirely new line of body alterations from which to choose. Today, the magnifying glass examines every body part in search of flaws. The nose might be too big, the skin too wrinkled, the eyelids too droopy, the jaw too round, the breasts too small, the scalp balding, the stomach slack, etc. As the cultural demands for beauty become more unrealistic and difficult (if not impossible) to attain, the magnification of body flaws increases, and the body becomes more technologized.

I want to propose a term to help make the distinction between the technologized body, a body that has undergone technological intervention, and what I will call the "gross body." The term "gross body" works to encompass the economic, emotional and physical ramifications of body alteration and the pursuit of beauty. First, by an economic analogy with "gross income" or "gross receipts," the term calls up the body *in its entirety, before*

deductions or alterations are made. This is the body that has not met technology to alter its appearance. Second, the "gross body" echoes the emotional pain of believing that the body you live in is "gross" or flagrant. The self-loathing an individual experiences when she believes her body is too this or that, too fat and too ugly, should not be overlooked. And third, the term reflects the physical image of a body that perceives itself as aesthetically displeasing. One dictionary definition actually refers to the body, defining "gross" as "excessively or unattractively fat or large."[4] "Gross" also has a definition for anatomy or pathology where it is defined as something visible without the aid of a microscope, as in a gross lesion.

The gross body, then, is a body before alterations, a body on the verge of becoming obsessed with its appearance, and hence a body that is moving into the realm of psychic anguish due to the very "grossness" of its nature. The gross body is the opposite of the plastic and technologized body--it is a body that is not controlled and not contained, a body that is prone to excess, a body that does not rely on devices or procedures that thereby render it plastic. But in an appearance-obsessed society, the gross body *desires* to become plastic. What are the tensions involved here? And what are the degrees of submission?

By setting up a distinction between the technologized and gross body, I am not merely reproducing a tired binary that suggests "technology" is "bad," and "nature" is good or somehow more "authentic." Indeed, bodies have always been "technologized," to some extent, from the moment "mankind" began to adopt or depend upon external methods to ensure its survival. I intend the gross body to operate as a metaphysical concept or a metaphor on a continuum that recognizes the increased technologization of the body. My purpose in deriving this continuum is to establish theoretical guidelines from which to

monitor an individual's psychic anguish, and to draw clear grounds upon which I can discuss an individual's physical pain and mutilation when engaged in beauty pursuits.

I want now to turn to the work of two feminist theorists who have most influenced my thoughts on the body to see where the technologized body and the gross body might fit into their critical methodologies. In *Unbearable Weight*, Bordo uses a Foucauldian paradigm and makes the distinction between the intelligible body and the useful body. For Bordo, the intelligible body "includes our scientific, philosophic, and aesthetic representations of the body--our cultural c*onceptions* of the body, norms of beauty, models of health, and so forth" (181). The useful body, in contrast to the intelligible body, follows "a set of *practical* rules and regulations through which the living body is 'trained, shaped, obeys, responds,' becoming, in short, a socially adapted and 'useful body'" (181). The intelligible body, then, is how the body is conceived, while the useful body marks how the conceptual is put into practice, how the symbolic becomes the real.

In "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason," Elizabeth Grosz provides us with two different conceptions of the body. Here the body is discussed as a site of social inscription, and as the locus of lived experience. The definition of the inscriptive body draws on the work of Nietzsche, Kafka and Foucault, while that of the lived body is influenced by phenomenology, psychology and psychoanalysis. According to Grosz, the inscriptive approach "conceives the body as a surface on which social law, morality, and values are inscribed" (198). The lived body "refers largely to the lived experience of the body, the body's internal or psychic inscription" (198). Grosz argues that the inscriptive

body "analyzes a *social*, public body," whereas the lived body "takes the body-schema or imaginary anatomy as its object(s)" (198).

Are Bordo and Grosz providing a similar framework of analysis but applying different terms? Is the intelligible body to the inscriptive body as the useful body is to the lived body? Does my construction of the gross body and the technologized body differ from their conceptualizations?

I would argue that there is a difference between the intelligible body and the inscriptive body. The former implies a passive conceptual realization of the body, whereas the latter is a more active inscription of this conceptualization onto the body. In contrast to both of these is the gross body. This body is neither an aesthetic representation nor a cultural concept of the body, nor must it be thought of as a body that has been inscribed by social laws, for the social laws that inscribe the body work to enforce aesthetic standards. The gross body is the uncapitalized body, the body that has not yet been altered.[3] This body is gross because to meet aesthetic ideals, the body must always be in the imperative mode--changing this, altering that.

The categories of the useful and the lived body are more similar than those of the intelligible and inscriptive body. According to Bordo, the useful body is one that conforms to social rules that train the body to be useful. In effect, the useful body is modeled on what Foucault, in *Discipline & Punish*, calls the "docile body" (136-38). This body follows directions, integrates well with the status quo, and is thus socially "useful." Similarly, Grosz's description of the lived body outlines a body that has been psychically inscribed to follow directions and to become "useful." The plastic or technologized body is also concerned with representing the cultural ideal or status quo. Like the useful and the lived

body, the technologized body contributes to the economy by actively purchasing products and by subscribing to ideals of beauty that require continuous expenditures. However, the technologized body is not necessarily a useful one. From an economic perspective, the technologized body is useful in that it stimulates and generates a market that depends on a patient pool's discontent with its appearance. But from the perspective of production, the technologized body is *not* always useful when it comes to function. Plastic bodies are show bodies, and with show bodies, form and function do not necessarily meet.

Male bodybuilding offers a prime example of this separation. The bodybuilder's muscles *imply* that he is capable of performing strenuous labour, but the labour required to build such a body is done for competition only. The bodybuilder's muscles have a use value only on the competition dais, not in terms of labour. These muscles fit into the workforce for show or special effects--bodybuilders are bouncers, models, bill collectors etc. In fact, bodybuilders are devoted to the *leisure* that it takes to pursue their hulking image.

Breast implants are yet another example of the separation of form and function. Their function is aesthetic, not organic; in fact, implants often *decrease* function. A woman who has had her breasts augmented or reduced is no longer able to exercise the biological functions of the breast; form overrules function. Hence, there is a distinction to be made between the "useful" and the technologized or plastic body.

Bordo's term "useful" picks up the Marxist theories of use value and exchange value. Her work relies heavily on the Marxist notion of the "direct grip" that culture has on our bodies, the ways in which culture structures our bodily habits in everyday life (16). Unlike Grosz, whose work relies more specifically on a psychoanalytic approach, Bordo adamantly situates her work within a culture of consumption, and recognizes that a capitalist society

defines a "useful" body from the perspective of its consumptive practices. While Bordo's work is excellent in its focus on the discourses that encourage individuals to consume beauty alterations, what we need now is a better theorization of how late capitalism *relies* on and requires individuals to be obsessed with appearances.

In order to gauge an individual's degree of submission to beauty practices, I want to work on a continuum that has as its terminus points the gross body on one end and the plastic or technologized body on the other. Again, I want to emphasize that I do not see these positions occupying an either/or dichotomy. A body never exclusively functions as either "gross" or "plastic." These categories are somewhat determined by the varying economic, emotional, and physical states of the individual. Keep in mind that there is some truth in the rhetoric of reformation and its promises of success for bodily conformity. The continuum of gross and plastic allows for the inevitable movement between striving for an ideal beauty and striving for self-acceptance, as well as for acknowledging that discourses of beauty, in order to have their full impact, are dependant on the notion of the grotesque or monstrous body that occupies the other side of the beauty binary. The gross body represents this "other" to beauty, without necessarily occupying the negative part of the binary.

Teresa Ebert's *Ludic Feminism* has also been influential in helping me to pinpoint my discomfort with the dominant feminist theories of the body. Ebert uses the term "ludic feminism" to describe "a feminism that is founded upon poststructuralist assumptions about linguistic play, difference, and the priority of discourse and thus substitutes a politics of representation for radical social transformation" (3). She takes issue with ludic feminism, arguing that it is emptied of any revolutionary politics to emancipate women and all oppressed peoples from the exploitation of capitalism.

Ebert's book opens with a provocative question. Why, she asks, at a time when "'two-thirds of all labour in the world is done by women,'...who are highly exploited and underpaid," does ludic feminism take the performative body instead of the *labouring* body as its central concern (ix)? By neglecting to analyze the economic relations of the *labouring* body, ludic feminism turns away from the site where revolutionary politics are most needed. Ebert's arguments for a historical materialist critique, in line with the Marxist tradition, are persuasive; her goal, then, is to return the revolutionary knowledge of historical materialism to a feminism that has lost its revolutionary aims. By arguing against the "ludic turn in feminism" (xi-xii), Ebert provides a convincing argument for historical materialism in an age when Marxist critique does not represent the cutting edge of postmodern theory.

It is useful at this point to provide a brief overview of feminist theorists who take the body as their primary focus of interest. In *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz outlines three categories within feminist theory of possible positions of theorizing the body. The first category is egalitarian feminism; this includes "figures as diverse as Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Mary Wollstonecraft, and other liberal, conservative, and humanist feminists, even ecofeminists" (15). In this group, the biological specificities of the female body--"menstruation, pregnancy, maternity, lactation, etc." (15)--are regarded *either* as a limitation for women's access to equality *or*, more positively, as a means by which women have privileged intuitive insights. Members of this first category, with its emphasis on biology, argue that biology needs to be modified in order for women to gain equality. For them, reproductive technology offers emancipatory possibilities.

"Social constructionism" is Grosz's second category, which includes "the majority of feminist theorists today: Juliet Mitchell, Julia Kristeva, Michèle Barrett, Nancy Chodorow,

Marxist feminists, psychoanalytic feminists, and all those committed to a notion of the social construction of subjectivity" (16). Unlike the egalitarian feminists who view biology as something to overcome, this category looks more to biology in terms of how bodies are socially marked and inscribed as male or female, how men are coded in the area of production whereas women are consistently evaluated for their role in *re*production. Feminists in this category critique hegemonic discourses that create and perpetuate gender ideologies (male as assertive and strong, female as passive and compliant). According to Grosz, "the constructionists hold a number of distinctive commitments, including the belief that it is not biology per se but the ways in which the social system organizes and gives meaning to biology that is oppressive to women" (17). In other words, it is not *because* of biology that we have restrictive gender ideologies; rather, we have fixed gender roles because patriarchy *requires* women's oppression and therefore circulates and supports limiting and "traditional" gender roles.

Grosz lists the third category as "sexual difference" feminists, in which she includes "Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Gayatri Spivak, Jane Gallop, Moira Gatens, Vicki Kirby, Judith Butler, Naomi Schor, Monique Wittig, and many others" (17). This group, Grosz contends, is concerned with "the *lived body*, the body insofar as it is represented and used in specific ways in particular cultures. For them, the body is neither brute nor passive but is interwoven with and constitutive of systems of meaning, signification, and representation" (18).

Grosz's typology is very useful to summarize the theoretical strategies of feminist theorists of the body. Her own work places her in the "sexual difference" category, for she sees the "body as social and discursive object, a body bound up in the order of desire,

signification, and power" (19). For Ebert, however, Grosz's theories privilege power in the *discursive* realm and thereby separate them from the "historical materiality of the divisions of labor and relations of production" (236).[6] In calling for a transformative feminist politics, Ebert questions the political effects of rewriting "knowledge and everyday culture through the specificities of the body" (236). How, she wonders, do ludic examinations of the body *embody* an emancipatory politics?

Ebert also argues that by equating materialism with the "raw materials" or "raw matter" of bodies, Grosz, along with other ludic feminists, wrongly retheorizes materialism "as a mode of idealism, what [Ebert] calls *matterism*: the matter of the body, the matter of sexuality, the matter of race, and, above all, the matter of language" (25). Such an erasure of historical materialism for a matterism threatens to isolate the body from its function as an economic agent, and from its function as a *labouring* body.

Why am I, along with Ebert, so against this occlusion? Historical materialism is the foundation for a socialist feminism that is revolutionary--as it is meant to be. A revolutionary politics "insists that the material is fundamentally tied to the economic sphere and to the relations of production" (Ebert 37). Such a politics operates in direct contrast to capitalism, for it insists that production "fulfills needs instead of making profits" (36). This insistence is of particular importance today, when transnational corporations no longer adhere to a social ethics and continue to lay workers off even as corporations announce record profits. As Ebert argues, "Making profits...is the denial of the needs of the many and the legitimization of the desires of the few" (36). To privilege the *matter* of the body, of sexuality, etc., over historical materialism is to ignore the very real economic conditions that contribute to and define

oppression. In other words, ludic feminism's overall rejection of a revolutionary politics makes it, in part, complicit with the very systems it claims it is trying to overthrow.

This argument may seem like a harsh critique of the work of a large number of feminist theorists. However, feminism emerged as a response to oppressive social conditions for women; it also emerged in response to transforming economic conditions. To detour from these pressing issues is potentially to empower patriarchal systems that continue to oppress. Ebert comes down hard on Grosz's work and on ludic feminists in general for the following reason:

> The renewed...celebration of the 'intensity of flows' of the body in such texts as Grosz's *Volatile Bodies*, are complicit with the political status quo in that they contribute to current efforts to recall women from the labor force and are linked to other regressive efforts to reinstate domesticity, the traditional family and the regime of the social as composed of specific bodies. (239)

Far from supporting the status quo, Ebert insists that a third-wave feminism take as its aim *not* the fetishization of libidinal bodies, but a political critique that attempts "to end the exploitative regime of profit and with it the unequal global division of labor and distribution of wealth" (302). No small task, but a goal that must be established, for historical materialism, far from being a utopic dream, "is a concrete *praxis*: it is a critique of the *existing* relations of production and exploitation in order not just to interpret the world...but to *change* it" (Ebert 227).

To apply an historical materialist critique to a profit-driven beauty industry is to reveal that the rhetoric of reformation produces self-loathing, which in turn encourages consumption. Consumption of both goods and services in beauty pursuits involves the

exploitation of workers, for whom this time is unpaid labour. In short, a revolutionary feminist politics of beauty critiques not only medical technology, for diverting its energies to profit rather than health, but also a late capitalist quest to homogenize bodies for the sake of profit. Again, no small task. Attempting to change the ideology of beauty, however, is a revolutionary act.

Notes

1. Current trends toward privatization are just one example of how the ideology of fiscal accountability plays itself out.

2. For example, a 1994 ad in *Working Women* has the headline, "How Do You Stay Competitive in a World Where Youth Counts as Much as Experience?" The woman photographed is roughly 30. This illustrates how advertising largely determines when "age" becomes a factor. Aiming ads at women who are 30 contributes to the body-panic that encourages women to consume beauty products for financial security (a competitive edge).

3. In the introduction to *Healing Technologies: Feminist Perspectives*, Kathryn Strother Ratcliff defines technology in relation to the body as that which includes "devices, drugs, and procedures" (1).

4. See *Funk & Wagnalls Standard College* Dictionary. Canadian Edition. Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, 1982.

5. The body at birth, whether it is disfigured by thalidomide or well-formed, is the gross body. This does not mean "natural" (a thalidomide baby is not "natural"); however, the term gross body provides a point of reference from which to theorize.

6. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler makes the same theoretical manoeuvre. According to Ebert, Butler confines materiality "to the level of the superstructure, to discourse" (212).

Chapter One

Beauty in a Surgical Age

While a dominant standard of beauty has existed in every age, the concept of beauty has never been static. An example of just how radically beauty has fluctuated over the ages can be seen in a recent advertisement in *Texas Monthly* magazine (Figure 1). The left portion of the advertisement displays *La Baigneuse de Valpiçon* (1808), by the French painter Jean Ingres. Long considered a masterpiece, *La Baigneuse* depicts the female cultural ideal of beauty in the early nineteenth century as plump and curvaceous. The ad, however, refutes the general consensus of this historical moment of beauty by juxtaposing it with contemporary standards of female beauty. In large letters running across the top of the ad is this caption: "A MASTERPIECE. UNLESS YOU SEE IT IN YOUR OWN MIRROR." The advertisement is for liposuction, and it takes a moment for the realization to sink in that Ingres's "masterpiece" is being used *not* as an example of female beauty, but as an example of a female body in need of alterations.

Just how does an advertisement for liposuction justify using a "masterpiece" as its main selling feature? The text that runs to the right of the painting is worth quoting in full. It states:

> Visions of beauty change in time, but basic body shapes do not. Even when people work themselves into excellent condition, a basic shape remains. A shape that often includes certain unwanted areas of fat: Bulges that won't be worked off. Dieted off. Wished off.

Figure 1 has been removed due to copyright legislation. The liposuction advertisement was taken from *Texas Monthly* magazine (April 1986: 176).

> Today, there is a new surgical procedure called Lipo-Suction that could permanently sculpt away certain fatty areas on your body. These could include saddle bags, hips, tummies, buttocks, knees, inner thighs, spare tires, ankles, [and] necklines...If you are a good candidate for this procedure--in good health and not significantly overweight--you may someday look in the mirror and see something amazing: An improved vision of beauty...that is you.

The advertisement's narrative clearly illustrates the separation between fitness and beauty. It does not matter if the body is already in "excellent condition"; what matters most is the overall *shape* of the body.

The text establishes that the body shape of *La Baigneuse* can only be a "masterpiece" if it is not the reflection seen in your own mirror. By anachronistically comparing *La Baigneuse* to contemporary standards of beauty, the ad presents medical technologies as salvations, thus valorizing the role that medicine plays in beauty.

The advertisement cleverly operates on two levels. On the one hand, by omitting both the artist's name and the title of the painting, the advertisement appeals to an educated audience, one that already knows its reference, or one that believes in the idea of art as a rare commodity. On the other hand, however, the advertisement operates on the very simplistic level of presenting a body at odds with contemporary standards of beauty. Viewers will automatically "read" this body as deviating from conventional ideals. In addition, for those who do *not* immediately identify the painting, the word "masterpiece" in the opening line locates *La Baigneuse* as an icon of art history. And although Ingres's name is not mentioned, the link between artist and surgeon is distinctly made. Beneath the picture of the painting,

written in large bold letters where the artist's name would normally be identified, appears the name of the doctor who will transform your body into a masterpiece: ALAN GAYNOR M.D.

As a cultural document, this ad usefully illustrates the sociohistorical flux of the standards of female beauty. Ingres's notion of beauty "as something large, simple and continuous" (Clark 213) is here juxtaposed with Dr. Gaynor's subscription to contemporary cultural ideals of thinness. Gaynor's new and "improved vision of beauty" which promises "permanent" results is made possible because of technological medical "advancements." In other words, while the advertisement aligns Gaynor with such artistic geniuses as Ingres, Gaynor's artistic abilities are meant to be read as superior because of the technologically advanced age in which he works. Ingres was a painter and admirer of the female form; Gaynor also purports to admire the female form. Ingres's art was painting; Gaynor's art is "body sculpturing." While Ingres might have created a masterpiece, Gaynor boasts that he can improve on it.

In this chapter, I explore the cultural obsession with beauty that has made cosmetic surgery a multi-million dollar industry. First, I provide an historical summary of cosmetic surgery. Second, I list the many surgical procedures available today. Third, I situate the critical debate surrounding cosmetic surgery, outlining the positions of both the feminist theorists who reject the notion that aesthetic surgery is emancipatory, and those theorists who see it as a potentially liberating site for the enactment of female agency. Finally, I look to literary sources that expose the psychic anguish involved in the pursuit of beauty. By linking the rhetoric of reformation to a medical industry that is increasingly profit-driven, I discuss

the increased commodification of bodies, and highlight how beauty pursuits involve unpaid labour.

History

The earliest reported plastic surgery was done in approximately 1000 B.C. in India, and, by early in the fifteenth century, plastic surgery had moved to the European continent. From the early sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, plastic surgery was sporadically performed for congenital abnormalities such as harelips, cleft palates and ear correction and for deformities produced by venereal disease (Davis, *Reshaping* 15). Advancements in the field, however, were slow until the introduction of anesthesia in 1846. Moreover, "the body was thought to be the corporeal manifestation of the relationship between God and man, with disease and deformity being due to the consequences of immorality" (Davis, *Reshaping* 15). Only a courageous or unbelieving sinner and an equally courageous or unbelieving surgeon dared tamper with the consequences of divine retribution.

Mass-scale disfigurements to soldiers during the Crimean and two World Wars contributed to major developments in the field, including techniques for reconstructing limbs and grafting scarred and burned skin. Indeed, plastic surgery underwent something of a "moral face lift" as it became associated with the physical reconstruction of patriotic young men who had fought for their country. It became, in other words, a respectable field of medicine. Plastic surgery was transformed again when it began to be performed more frequently for purely cosmetic reasons in the second half of the twentieth century. Attention to aesthetics, rather than to pure function, marked a difference between cosmetic and plastic surgery.

General acceptance of cosmetic surgery first gained a footing in professions that rely heavily on physical beauty, such as modelling and acting. Arthur Marwick provides a trajectory of beauty ideals spanning four centuries in his study *Beauty in History*. He refers to the rising film industry of the 1920s as "the greatest single source for the employment of beautiful people so far created" (295).[1] The word "employment" is crucial, for the desire to attain gainful employment in the booming entertainment industry encouraged individuals to "pay" more attention to their appearance. When television became the popular form of home entertainment in the 1950s, it was accompanied by a heightened awareness of appearance by television viewers. By the fifties and early sixties, the demand for cosmetic surgery was on the rise; "one of the first causes of this change can be traced to television. Just as the swing from silent films to talkies ended the careers of many celebrities with poor voices, television ended the careers of many radio stars" (Heidi and Earp 13). Television brought with it an emphasis on physical appearance that could be projected to millions more viewers at home than even magazines reached. This mass distribution of glamour enabled a homogenization of beauty to the point where, now, models and movie stars are the beauty index by which men and women measure themselves if they want to be considered beautiful.

Celebrities and models continue to set the beauty index, and as more stars have cosmetic surgery to enhance their appearances, beauty ideals, by "natural" means, become increasingly unattainable. As a consequence of this growing dependence on surgical means to "enhance" appearance, beauty in the late 20th Century is inextricably linked with medical intervention. Surgical procedures available today range widely from face-lifts, nose-jobs, liposuction and breast implants, to cosmetic genital surgery for both men and women.[2] The medical profession has devised a number of methods by which the gross body can be altered

to become "any" body. Moreover, the vast number of procedures available illustrates how minutely the body's surface is scrutinized for perceived flaws. As the demand for surgical alteration increases, and as the consumer's gaze, like that of the surgeon's, is trained to become more and more microscopic, new procedures will continue to be developed. The medical profession would have us believe that new procedures arise from patient demand; however, as I outline below, the pursuit of new technologies cannot be separated from specialized medicine and a for-profit health care system.

Throughout this study, I use the term cosmetic surgery to refer to aesthetic improvements and plastic surgery to refer to reconstructive procedures.[3] This is an important distinction, for, although the terms are frequently interchanged, there are fundamental differences between them. Cosmetic surgery deals primarily with the aesthetic improvement of an already "normal" appearance. In contrast, plastic surgery focuses on correcting congenital disorders, and/or deformities due to accidents; it is not limited to improving appearance alone; in many cases it is about restoring physical function.[4] The plastic surgeon's goal is to make the patient as "normal" looking as possible so that he or she will not suffer the psychological pain that often accompanies physical deformities. However, beauty discourses often interchange the terms cosmetic ("elective" and aesthetic) and plastic ("necessary" and reconstructive). In so doing, the line between the necessary and the elective is blurred. When this happens, the woman who undergoes a face-lift is as much in need of surgery as the burn victim who has skin grafts.

Yet defining cosmetic surgery as a practice that *enhances* the already "normal" appearance is also misleading.[5] Theorists such as Kathy Davis contend that cosmetic surgery

is in fact all about *becoming* normal or "ordinary." In *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*, Davis argues that women who undergo cosmetic surgery exercise a form of female agency beneficial to their negotiation with femininity. According to Davis, femininity requires "knowing what needs to be done to remedy one's body, assessing the possibilities, and acting upon them" ("Remaking" 173). Under these guidelines, she continues, it "becomes possible to imagine how an activity like cosmetic surgery could be a way for a woman who has tried everything else to engage in the activity of doing femininity along with the rest of her sex" (173).

For Davis, the increased normalization of cosmetic surgery is less about women's inability to recognize a biopolitics of oppression than it is about their ability to manipulate the system to their advantage. But whereas Davis believes that women exercise agency in deciding to further invest in beauty practices, Sandra Lee Bartky argues that "making-up the face is, in fact, a highly stylized activity that gives little rein to self-expression" (70). Bartky does not specifically discuss cosmetic surgery in *Femininity and Domination*; however, her Foucauldian analysis of power and how it operates on the female body accommodates an analysis of medicalized interventions.

Bartky argues that Foucault's systems of power do not take into account that there is more than one body, and that women's bodies are subject to different forms of disciplinarian power than men's. She uses Foucault's model of the panopticon to analyze how women are interpellated into the beauty-system. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault explains that the Panopticon's design leaves the convict in "a state of conscious and permanent visibility" (200). The prisoner "is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (200).[6] Bartky extrapolates from this theory

of institutionalized surveillance to conclude that a chronic state of self-policing "is a sign that the tight, disciplinary control of the body has gotten a hold on the mind as well" (65). She teaches us that when theorists such as Davis discuss "agency" in women's decisions to "choose" cosmetic surgery, we had better scrutinize the systems of power that make this *choice* both available and acceptable.

Virtually all of the debates surrounding cosmetic surgery focus on a discussion of agency and choice. Understandably, women's ability to act and choose has been a focal point of study (after all, feminism, as an oppositional social movement, involves providing choices), but a rigorous critique of agency within capitalism has been missing. Few theorists are willing to suggest that having choices is anything but emancipatory; however, when we remember that the foundation of capitalism and a profit-driven economy must provide the *illusion* of choice, then we recognize that agency is often a matter of external forces determining our actions.

A materialist critique of agency recognizes that individuals are irreducibly social and cannot be analysed independently of their social context. Nor, as Marx reminds us in *The German Ideology*, can society be discussed as if it were a person or subject in itself (224). Rather, society can be defined as the "*set of relationships* that links individuals" (Frisby and Sayer 96); agents act within the parameters of a society that is constructed by a historical process. In other words, individual agents act according to the opportunities that appear available at any given historical moment. To say that they act out of "false consciousness" would be to privilege their consciousness over their material experience. "Scientific analysis therefore entails a *critique* of actors' common-sense conceptions of the social world and a

demystification of the 'natural, self-understood forms of social life'--the phenomenal forms--on which these conceptions are founded (Frisby and Sayer 110-11).

The elevation of either the individual agent or hegemonic structures contributes to the difficulty of theorizing the relationship between agency and subjectivity, and social and discursive structures. To consolidate an account of the force of social structures in contrast to individual agency would involve coming somewhere in between looking only to "society" ("a set of relationships that links individuals") or "culture" ("that which goes beyond the system of self-preservation of the species" [Adorno 100]) and focusing solely on the agent.

Davis, attempting to find some middle ground, argues that "[a]lthough women who engage in cosmetic surgery are complying with the cultural constraints of femininity, they do not necessarily agree with them" (*Reshaping* 35). In other words, at the same time that women make *informed* choices and are aware of the ideologies that encourage them to pursue beauty, they may be acting against their will. Yet it is difficult to equate disagreeing with a practice and nonetheless having it performed, with a notion of agency, a concept traditionally associated with empowerment. Moreover, Davis' focus on a woman's right to choose ignores the more important question of *who* has the right to such choices, thereby ignoring how race, class and sexual orientation influence the possibility of choice.

In my view, Davis' defense of a "monadic individualism" (Ebert 301), a world in which women are free to make the choices they desire, is (inadvertently) complicit with the very system of oppression that impedes women's emancipation--patriarchal capitalism. In arguing for a woman's individual right to choose, Davis privileges experience (personal and local) over a critique of an economic system with global proportions. Put another way, she "distracts critical inquiry and transformative action away from the *system* of capital" (Ebert

20). To quote Maureen McNeil, from her essay on reproductive technologies, "The language of individual choice also infuses the language of consumerism" (10). The immediate danger in the link between choice and consumerism is that by situating cosmetic surgery and other beauty technologies within a framework of individual choice, they are reduced to consumer goods, mere products to be purchased. Because body alterations have been presented as involving the purchase of consumer goods or services, bodies have become increasingly commodified, and medical research and new technologies profit in this exchange. Such a close link between pharmaceutical companies and medical research should give us real concern. To what degree do capitalist industries (represented by pharmaceutical firms) govern the direction of technological "advancements"?

The Medical Complex

There has yet to be a well-researched analysis of cosmetic surgery that critiques the medical profession and its exploitation of patients for profit.[7] Critical feminist inquiry of medical interventions has focused more rigorously on reproductive technology.[8] In order to provide a theoretical framework of the kinds of ethical and legal questions that are missing in a discussion of cosmetic surgery, I turn to feminist work on reproductive technology. The debate in this area mirrors that in cosmetic surgery; feminists are divided into two groups: those who believe reproductive technology offers women potential liberation from unwanted pregnancy and infertility,[9] and those who view these new technologies as further sites of female oppression.

In *Feminism Confronts Technology*, Judy Wajcman provides an illuminating analysis of the advances in "treating" infertility. Whereas formerly a woman could grow to adapt her

life to childlessness, new technologies "redefine what counts as illness," and infertility becomes "a medical condition--a problem capable of technological intervention" (62). The very existence of the technologies, Wajcman continues, "changes the situation even if the woman does not use them. Her 'infertility' is now treatable, and she must in a sense actively decide not to be treated" (62). Current discourses of cosmetic surgery argue that we have a "choice" whether or not to have a nose-job, for example, when in fact the environment in which this choice exists has been created by a profit-driven medical industry.

How liberating, then, are these new technological choices being offered to us? "In the beginning, new technologies come as options. Whether we take them or leave them is up to us. But gradually they become part and parcel of the socially accepted and expected pattern of behavior. In many ways, subtle or not subtle, choice turns into pressure" (Bech-Gernsheim 29).[10] How, for example, can an "infertile" woman cease treatments when infertility is now defined as a "curable" condition (Bech-Gernsheim 37)? How can one accept aging gracefully when it has been redefined as a treatable condition? The decision to cease treating "curable" conditions or not to "choose" treatment at all becomes a failure *not* of medical technology but of personal will. The individual patient repeatedly comes under scrutiny (how can she in good faith stop treatments?), while the medical profession that makes these "choices" possible remains untouched. But being critical of technology is not the equivalent of being a Luddite. I do not want to give the impression that beauty pursuits before late capitalism were somehow more "utopic" and "pure." Nor do I want to suggest that *all* attempts to alter physical appearance are wrong. Arguing for an end to new and invasive medical technologies does not provide the solution. Feminist critics must continue to stress the importance of improved health. In the words of Strother Ratcliff, "it is important

that we question technological developments and the directions in which they are moving at their inception because a technological trajectory is difficult to redirect once it is established" (3).

The links between medical technology, business, high-profit and the virtually unrestrained development of new cosmetic surgeries, cannot be overlooked.[11] According to Barbara Drygulski Wright,

> we have a Western-dominated market economy that knows very well that technological innovation can be exploited for an economic return. The market economy has a vested interest in turning technological discoveries into marketable commodities, exaggerating their benefits, minimizing their risks, and expanding their clientele for a given product to include as many people as possible. Business turns enormous profits from the marketing of medical technologies, and in a kind of symbiosis, those profits then help to finance further research. (14)

The Dow Corning breast implant scandal reveals the enormous profits made at the expense of healthy women. When the potential dangers of silicone implants were made public, the *procedure* itself did not come under great scrutiny, but the product did. Silicone became the scapegoat, and further research into saline filled implants was financed. More disconcerting is the revelation that a health care system purportedly constructed to safeguard consumers from questionable and risky innovations "has failed both to identify the risks tied to specific technologies, to block the use of such technologies when definite risks have been identified, and to incorporate social and ethical concerns" (Strother Ratcliff 193). The system has failed because profit, instead of health, is the new concern of medical technology. And as Ebert

continually reminds us, "Making profits...is the denial of the needs of many and the legitimization of the desires of the few" (36).

Feminist Response

Only recently have feminists begun to analyze the phenomenon of cosmetic surgery and its growing acceptance in North American society as a whole. As Carole Spitzack notes in "The Confession Mirror: Plastic Images For Surgery," "Practices such as cosmetic surgery are difficult to criticize precisely because they are seen to be elective and empowering" (40). Choice and agency, then, provide the rhetorical foundation that discourages a critique of cosmetic surgery. But what is most surprising about articles and journalistic reports of cosmetic surgery is the complete absence of a discussion of violence. Surgeons in this field work to create a link between the surgery they perform and the art artists create (recall the *La Baigneuse* advertisement). Yet it would be wise to remember that the metaphor of butchering has long been used to describe flawed operations of all sorts.

In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol Adams discusses how patriarchal attitudes include the idea that "violence can and should be masked" (14). While her book focuses on a vegetarian politics that argues against the objectification of animals as meat (animals become the absent referent), many similarities can be drawn between the masking of violence in slaughter and the masking of violence in cosmetic surgery. For example, doctors, journalists, and feminist theorists direct much attention to questioning the patient's motivation and querying about agency, but what is overlooked in this obsessive focus on the patient is the erasure of medicalized violence. This erasure masks the fact that for every painful and experimental operation performed a surgeon actually agrees (*and is trained*) to perform it.

Yet the surgeon's motivations are never scrutinized, and the outcomes of the surgeon's operations remain virtually unexamined.

For example, in a recent cover story in *Macleans's* magazine (July 8, 1996), Patricia Chisholm interviewed Dr. Robert Stubbs, the Toronto plastic surgeon who pioneered two penis enlargement procedures. In outlining some of the possible side-effects, Chisholm reported that Dr. Stubbs "is quick to warn that some patients report the operation was a disaster that ruined their lives" (39). Readers are led to believe, because he is "quick to warn" patients, and because he turns away "75 per cent of the men who contact him," that Dr. Stubbs is a responsible and caring physician. However, when we read more critically, we realize that Stubbs continues to operate *in spite of knowing* his procedures have "ruined" some men's lives. Medicalized violence, condoned by an overwhelming faith in the power of technological advancements, is completely ignored. Medical technology, then, becomes the absent referent in the critique of cosmetic surgery, and profit, the driving force that encourages this technology.

Advertising and the Creation of a Patient Pool

Advertising has played a large role in creating a demand for cosmetic surgery. Both Naomi Wolf and Susan Faludi focus on the rhetoric of disease that surrounds the topic of female aging and convincingly argue that advertising has been responsible for boosting the demand for cosmetic surgery. In *The Beauty Myth,* Wolf critiques the medical profession for its unethical goals in promoting "elective" surgeries. The "market creation" of cosmetic surgery, she argues, "seems not to be subject to the ethics of the genuine medical profession. Healing doctors would be discredited if they promoted behavior that destroyed health in

order to profit from damage" (234). Kathryn Strother Ratcliff supports this critique when she argues that we must question the incentive for profit that is built into medical research. "The for-profit intrusions into health care are of particular concern," she writes, "as they encourage the use of technology and diminish the importance of improved health as the overriding concern in decision making in a setting allegedly trying specifically to improve health" (3).

When Strother Ratcliff discusses "health," she refers to physical health, but "health" in reference to cosmetic surgery is used in a very different manner. In turning to advertising to attract clientele, cosmetic surgeons have cleverly directed issues of "wellness" away from physical health to focus instead on mental health. This enables Dr. John Taylor, president-elect of the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons, to discuss "psychosurgery"--surgery performed to alleviate psychological pain and therefore to increase mental health.[12] Again, the focus is drawn *away* from the surgeons who are highly invested in attracting a patient-pool so they can utilize their new equipment and procedures, and more towards the patient's mental pain. In performing "psychosurgery," surgeons appear to be good samaritans in the business of alleviating psychic anguish. The large economic gains attached to such "humane" actions are rarely mentioned.

The extent to which advertising has been used to create a patient pool is more fully outlined in Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. Her research shows that in 1979 a ruling by the United States Federal Trade Commission made it possible for plastic surgeons to advertise their services in newspapers, magazines and on television. Four years later,

> the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons launched a 'practice enhancement' campaign, issuing a flood of press releases, 'pre- and post-op photos,' and patient 'education' brochures and videotapes. They billed 'body sculpturing' as safe, effective, affordable--and even essential to women's mental health. (217)

According to Faludi, the inspiration behind this flood of publicity was "a little problem with supply and demand" (217). The numbers of plastic surgeons had "quintupled since the 1960s," while "patient enthusiasm hadn't kept pace. By 1981, the flood of doctors into cosmetic surgery had made it the fastest-growing specialty in American medicine, and they simply needed more bodies" (217). By the mid-1980s, a wave of publicity hit magazines and newspapers in the United States, and cosmetic surgeons offered such deals as low monthly payments, easy credit approval, no down payments, and the acceptance of credit cards. Many surgeons even hired publicists to run slick ad campaigns, helping to create the impression that cosmetic procedures are not only risk-free, but necessary for success.

This "PR blitzkrieg," Faludi writes, and "not breakthroughs in medical technology," (218) succeeded in securing a large clientele. Cosmetic surgeons did not respond to a public *demand* for higher availability of services, for the demand was never there. Rather, the medical industry itself *created* the demand through its extensive advertising campaign. Medical technology, like any other technology, "creates its own market. It offers and sells an ever-growing range of products, and it needs to continually awaken and stimulate demand for what it sells" (Bech-Gernsheim 28). The field of cosmetic surgery is no exception. Faludi's statistics reveal that cosmetic surgeons "devot[e] as much as a quarter of their practices to correcting their colleagues' errors" (218-219). In other words, the iatrogenic

nature of cosmetic surgery is such that doctors create a patient pool that *requires* surgery--surgery that is no longer elective--in order to correct the damage done by the initial "elective" surgery.[13] Despite this glaring failure in medical technology, the Western world persists in believing technology signifies progress. In short, people believe that "to invest in technology is to invest in the future" (McNeil 1). But what will this future look like?

The Life and Loves of a She-Devil

Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* provides a glimpse into a future world in which cosmetic surgery is used not just to attain beauty, but to enact revenge. Published in 1983, the novel, much like Aldous Huxley's satiric *Brave New World* (1932), critiques not the advancements of science, *per se*, but the advancements of science as it affects human individuals. In *Brave New World*, the standardization of humans through increased advances in eugenics has been pushed to the fantastic. In the same manner, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* extends the technological implications of cosmetic surgery to a farcical conclusion, and presents a scathing attack on a social system in which women's "cultural capital,"[14] their access to power, is gained only through beauty.

Saturated with fairy tale motifs (a princess lives in a tower, an ugly-duckling is transformed), the novel deflates "the notion of ideality that is the goal of fairy tales and myths" (Walker 14). The ugly-duckling may indeed become a beauty, but the overt satire makes it impossible for the narrative to conclude with the conventional happily-ever-after ending. However, the novel highlights that beauty can be bought, and cosmetic surgery is the medical commodity that promises the key to this cultural capital. Not surprisingly, then, Weldon chooses to juxtapose the pursuit of beauty through cosmetic surgery with a fairy tale

ideality. Like fairy tales, the marketing of cosmetic surgery promises its recipients a utopic dream of transformation, a dream where anything is possible, any magic can occur.

The Life and Loves of a She-Devil provides a perfect opportunity for engaging in what Alan Sinfield, in *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, calls "dissident reading" (41). He uses the term "faultlines" to describe the moments within the cultural production of ideology where contradictions occur and where, consequently, there arises the opportunity to do damage through dissident reading. In his words, "dissident potential derives ultimately not from essential qualities in individuals...but from conflict and contradiction that the social order inevitably produces within itself, even as it attempts to sustain itself" (41). Weldon's satire forces us to turn a critical eye to the ideology of beauty and to the attendant faultlines which make such a criticism possible. *She-Devil* exposes the myth that women have cosmetic surgery for themselves; it exposes the unpaid labour involved in the transformation process, making clear that undergoing cosmetic surgery is *not* leisure time; and it exposes the contradiction of believing that a beautiful body is necessarily a more useful body, that its use-value increases.

Ruth, the novel's protagonist, is a heavy, unattractive, middle-aged housewife and mother whose life turns upside down when her husband, Bobbo, falls in love with the rich, thin and beautiful romance writer, Mary Fisher. As Bobbo returns home less and less frequently, Ruth becomes obsessed with Mary Fisher, who embodies the feminine ideal of grace and beauty. In contrast to Mary Fisher's delicate form, Ruth describes herself as follows:

> I am six foot two inches tall, which is fine for a man but not for a woman. I am as dark as Mary Fisher is fair, and have one of those jutting jaws which

> tall, dark women often have, and eyes sunk rather far back into my face, and a hooked nose. My shoulders are broad and bony and my hips broad and fleshy, and the muscles in my legs are well developed. My arms, I swear, are too short for my body. My nature and my looks do not agree. I was unlucky, you might think, in the great Lucky Dip that is woman's life. (9)

Having missed the "great Lucky Dip" of beauty, Ruth recognizes her powerlessness in a society that values women for their appearance and allots them power accordingly. Hence Ruth's catalogued images of ugliness provide the first faultline where a dissident reading can do damage. That is to say, Ruth's acknowledgement of her lack of beauty (according to society's standards) draws attention to the exclusionary propensities of beauty ideologies. The "Lucky Dip"[13] is just that--lucky; either one is genetically predisposed to meet the narrowed biological requirements of beauty, or one is not. The complete arbitrariness of this "Dip" exposes that homogenous beauty ideals potentially cause psychic pain and anguish in those who do not meet beauty standards.

As a foil to Ruth's character, Mary Fisher represents the culture's ideal of feminine beauty. When Ruth reflects on the disparity between herself and Mary Fisher, she thinks, "I am jealous! I am jealous of every little pretty woman who ever lived and looked up since the world began. I am, in fact, quite eaten up by jealousy, and a fine, lively, hungry emotion it is" (24). Ruth's resentment reveals how the discourse of desperation is key to her desire for self-transformation for, as Susan Jaret McKinstry argues, "the novel makes clear that to both Ruth and her husband, her body defines her self, and her self is unacceptably monstrous" (107). Ruth envies Mary's body; the body, then, becomes the battleground upon which the war is waged. In an effort to retrieve her husband and to wield the powers of female

sexuality, Ruth enacts her revenge when she undergoes radical cosmetic surgery to become beautiful.

While having aesthetic surgery is generally understood to be a matter of personal choice, Weldon's satire exposes the erroneous belief that women have surgery for themselves. The painful degree of Ruth's envy (personified by Mary Fisher) reveals that a beauty-rewarding culture psychically damages those who are not remunerated for their appearance. Indeed, Ruth's mental pain is palpable: "I look at my face in the bathroom mirror. I want to see something different. I take off my clothes. I stand naked. I look. I want to be changed" (44). Her decision to be surgically altered, therefore, must be analysed within a cultural context, one that recognizes the degree to which the culture colludes, and actually *participates,* in the transformation process by providing the necessary medical technology.

In addition to exposing a pervasive beauty ideology as a cultural pathology, Weldon illustrates my argument that the pursuit of beauty involves unpaid labour, not "leisure" time, as ideology would have us believe. After Ruth's husband leaves to live with his mistress, Ruth sets fire to their suburban home, abandons her children (she leaves them with Bobbo and Mary Fisher), and embarks on a four year odyssey in which she manipulates people and embezzles money in order to fund her expensive surgeries. The following is a description of the surgical procedures Ruth intends to purchase:

> The Hermione Clinic meant to take back Ruth's jaw three inches, raise and fine the eyebrows, lower the hair line with a skin-graft and lift slack from beneath the skin and the epicanthic fold above the eye. The ears would be pinned back and the lobes diminished, both in thickness and length.... As for her body, loose skin from beneath the arms would be tucked, and fat removed

> from shoulders, back, buttocks, hips and belly. If she insisted on leg shortening, the shoulders would be braced back to keep the arms in better proportion to the rest. (204)

Over several years, and with astronomical expense and recovery time, Ruth completes her series of operations. Her height is reduced from 6'2" to under 5'7", and surgeons sculpt her body into the shape of the woman who stole her husband's heart. In the makeover process Ruth's cheekbones are broken, her arms and legs are shortened, her breasts are lifted, her vagina is tightened, her clitoris is drawn back, and her buttocks are tucked. Due to the shock from repeated surgeries, her menstrual cycle requires artificial stimulation (219) and she is forced to take "increasing doses of heroin to dull the pain" (220). It takes approximately four years for the reconstructive surgery to be completed, but Ruth finally gets what she wants--the body of Mary Fisher, and her husband.

Ruth's time during this period cannot be described as leisurely. To the contrary, when not spending time recovering, Ruth busily plots how to acquire funds for the next surgical procedure. Therefore, her actions cannot be interpreted as a leisure pursuit. The money she spends at the Hermione Clinic and at the dentists having her teeth filed, as well as her time spent plotting to acquire money, is unpaid labour. Moreover, not only does Weldon reveal that leisure is not a component of Ruth's quest for beauty, she also makes clear that the body's use-value is diminished. Like Hans Christian Andersen's little mermaid, Ruth's legs are in perpetual pain after they are shortened: "with every step it was as if she trod on knives" (238). While the shorter Ruth may be more attractive according to a homogenized notion of beauty, the larger Ruth was strong and able to *use* her body without pain. After her

transformation, Ruth is described as a "blonde, simpering doll on stilts" (226). Comments such as this make it difficult to read the novel as a triumph of female ingenuity or revenge.

However, that is exactly what Kathy Davis does in "Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty." As I have already stated, Davis argues that cosmetic surgery is about "being ordinary, taking one's life in one's own hands, and determining how much suffering is fair" (23). For Davis, choosing to have cosmetic surgery can be read as a positive act of female agency. Passages from the novel that might support Davis's reading are numerous. For example, when Ruth decides to remodel her own body, she "laughed and said she was taking up arms against God Himself. Lucifer had tried and failed, but he was male. She thought she might do better, being female" (82). Weldon's subtle irony reveals a flaw in Ruth's logic; being female does not change Ruth's perception of beauty. She merely reproduces oppressive views of women when she picks and chooses from a male catalogue of beauty. In other words, the body she chooses to model herself after most represents the cultural ideal of femininity that Ruth railed against for years. Consequently, her transformation is not a process of self-creation, for she conforms to the standard ideal.

Clearly Ruth's makeover is of her own doing (she is not *forced* to have surgery), but it would be wrong to conclude that she acts *individually* and outside of any ideological constraints. For Sinfield, self-creation and cultural-creation cannot be determined in isolation; they are inextricably linked as "the same structure informs individuals and the society" (32-33). Ruth may *believe* that she acts autonomously, but she follows a well-sanctioned route for which she will be rewarded. What sets her slightly apart is the utter blind determination with which she secures her fate.

While revenge might appear to be the primary motivation behind Ruth's outrageous plan, Weldon explains that her novel emphasises envy (Bird 218). Ruth envies Mary Fisher's beauty, because she herself is ugly. At one point in the narrative she asks this question:

> And how, especially, do ugly women survive, those whom the world pities? The dogs, as they call us. I'll tell you; they live as I do, outfacing truth, hardening the skin against perpetual humiliation, until it's as tough and cold as a crocodile's. And we wait for old age to equalise all things. We make good old women. (10-11)

This is what it means to be a woman and to be "unfortunate" in the "Lucky Dip" of life. Ruth knows that the world pities her, and she experiences "perpetual humiliation" as a result. Clearly, Ruth "suffers" because she is not a pretty woman. However, Davis suggests that the "suffering" Ruth undergoes from her surgical procedures, offset by her growing addiction to heroin, is not "suffering" at all compared to the psychic anguish she feels at being an "ugly" woman. According to Davis, Weldon's novel is the

> story of a woman who suffers to such an extent under cultural norms of feminine beauty that she is willing to undergo the excruciating pain and staggering expense of cosmetic surgery to alter every part of her body. However, the heroine also uses cosmetic surgery as a source of empowerment, a way to regain control over her life. Ruth is both a victim of the feminine beauty system and one of its most devastating critics. ("Remaking" 30)

Being both victim and critic, however, does not place Ruth in an empowering position. On the contrary, her initial suffering (ugliness) only leads to more suffering (surgery), which in turn will bring lifelong suffering (chronic bodily pain).

Nonetheless, Davis insists on attributing Ruth's actions to revenge, rather than envy, and because Ruth "wins...in the 'battle between the sexes'" ("Remaking" 30), Davis identifies the novel as a "feminist" text. Only by reading the novel as a tale of revenge can she interpret Ruth's painful four years of surgery as a success. I also see the novel as a feminist text, but more for what it exposes, than what it sanctions. For when it is read as a tale of envy, a more disturbing account of beauty appears--one that depicts a woman who will go to any lengths to achieve an ideal. Such a reading reveals a pathological society in which sadistic services can be purchased, and are ultimately rewarded.

Weldon makes clear that the road to self-acceptance and "happiness" is intricately aligned with the body. Her novel "comments on the violence of cultural demands for female bodies resulting in self-loathing, in anorexia, in suicide" (McKinstry 112). And what makes Ruth's painful and expensive transformation so horrifying is that "she is intelligent, articulate, and aware of the power of her mind, yet is convinced that only the body articulates a self" (McKinstry 113). She reduces herself to body, and then literally reduces her body. When Ruth's surgeries are complete, she

> measured...round the bust, thirty-eight inches, the waist twenty-four inches, and the hips thirty-seven. Cortisone injections, given at intervals, gave her pretty face a childish innocence, subverting the harshness of experience, and kept her hair luxuriant. (235)

Bobbo grows tired of Mary Fisher (who subsequently dies of cancer), and Ruth successfully "wins" him back. Sometimes Ruth allows Bobbo to sleep with her, and more often she denies him, taking other lovers in his stead. "I cause Bobbo as much misery as he ever caused me," she states, "and more. I try not to, but somehow it is not a matter of male or female, after all; it never was, merely of power. I have all, and he has none. As I was, so he is now" (240).

No longer "ugly," and no longer subservient to her husband, Ruth makes Bobbo her slave by both giving and withholding sexual favours. Yet although she claims gender has nothing to do with her "power," the narrative reinscribes a gender ideology that gives women power through their sexual desirability. Ruth still *acts* within a matrix of patriarchal exchange where her "sex" is an item to exchange. But no matter how "successful" Ruth's plan is, she still must endure the physical pain of her transformation.

When questioned about the end of her novel, Weldon replied: "It is sad, life is sad" (qtd. in Bird, 229). Hence Weldon's satire is not an endorsement of conventional feminine ideals of beauty, nor is it an advertisement for female agency. As Ann Marie Hebert writes in "ReWriting the Feminine Script: Fay Weldon's Wicked Laughter," "Weldon's texts offer a penetrating look at sexual desire, sexual discontent, and the unequal distribution of power in the battle of the sexes" (22). In *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil,* the female body is shown to be the primary locus of patriarchal power. Accordingly, Ruth's complete makeover becomes a metaphor of women's oppression, for if beauty remains the only method by which Ruth can gain "power," then her transformation is a satirical attack on the values of patriarchal culture. Nobody "wins" in this novel.

In rewriting herself, Ruth does not challenge the beauty ideals for female bodies. Instead, as McKinstry argues, "Ruth literally reduces herself into another woman in order to regain her place as wife. She transforms herself into something smaller. She speaks only through the body" (112). In effect, she trades her earlier mental anguish at not being beautiful for the later physical pain of living in an altered body. Here, self-transformation is tantamount to self-destruction, and I would agree with McKinstry's reading of the novel as "an indictment of the violence women commit against their bodies in the production of an accepted ideal bodily self, and a warning about the potential for more active, outwardly directed violence against the men (and women) who demand that ideal self" (113). The "comic turn, turned serious" (241) that ends the novel reinforces that there is nothing funny about a woman wanting a different body. On the contrary, the desire for physical alterations is a dangerous social problem that requires a serious, economic critique.

Weldon's novel illustrates Iser's claim that fiction is not purely mimetic. Medical "advancements" have yet to reach a stage where a body's height can be so drastically reduced. Hence the power of *She-Devil* rests in its social forecasting; readers are forced to confront beauty systems that do not presently exist, and that might be unacceptable. For that alone, Weldon's novel is useful. Some might argue, however, that its fictional representation diminishes the greater impact it might have on readers. After all, Ruth is not a "real" person, and her complete body makeover remains just outrageous enough for the satire to have the most lasting and resounding effect. In other words, readers can distance themselves from identifying with Ruth because in the back of their minds they know that hers is an unlikely scenario. However, the increasing number of autobiographical accounts of women

undergoing surgical alterations is such that Weldon's tale may pale in comparison. In "The Anthropometry of Barbie," for example, Jacqueline Urla and Alan C. Swedlund document the "true" account of Cindy, 34, who, since 1989, has spent $55,000 on 18 operations to make herself into a real-life Barbie (299). Both Mary Fisher and "Barbie" represent female beauty ideals that are largely based on fiction. Whether fantasy, then, or pure social critique, *The Life and Loves of a She Devil* strikes a chord; it reminds women that beauty is power, and it also encourages us to seriously question how medical advancements affect individuals and society as a whole. In other words, we are forced to ask whether or not cosmetic surgery potentially reinforces and reproduces oppressive political systems for women.

The Body Complex

Feminist theorists, concerned with the discursive networks in capitalist patriarchy that produce and circulate the rhetoric of reformation, have devised a number of terms to address women's preoccupation with beauty. Wendy Chapkis, in *Beauty Secrets* (1986), refers to the politics of appearance; Carole Spitzack, in "The Confession Mirror" (1988), looks at beauty through an analysis of contemporary power tactics; Naomi Wolf, in *The Beauty Myth* (1990), discusses the beauty index; Susan Bordo, in *Unbearable Weight* (1993), writes of the technologies of body management; Dean MacCannell and Juliet Flower MacCannell refer to a beauty system (1987); and Sandra Lee Bartky, in *Femininity and Domination* (1990), theorizes what she calls the fashion-beauty complex. Despite the many phrases used, all of the above concentrate on the negative repercussions of the rhetoric of reformation and the impossibility of achieving "ideal" beauty in late capitalism.

Chapkis and Spitzack, through autobiographical accounts of their personal experiences with beauty systems, explore the pain of desiring and attempting to gain the homogenized beauty ideal. Wolf and Bordo analyze how beauty is indexed and inscribed on gendered bodies. The MacCannells discuss how women are judged by the degree to which they commit themselves to being attractive to men, and argue that the pursuit of beauty is proof of "original ugliness" (214). And Bartky analyses how the fashion-beauty complex glorifies the female body on the one hand, while it actively criticizes it on the other. According to Bartky, no matter how much a woman tries to live up to the standards of beauty and hygiene in a given time, the fashion-beauty complex sets her up to fail. Bartky explains, "All the projections of the fashion-beauty complex have this in common: They are images of what I am not...I am unacceptable as I am" (40). Hence the covert aim of the fashion-beauty complex is to create a subject who is infatuated "*with an inferiorized body*" (40).

While all of the above theorists provide excellent critiques of a biopolitics of oppression, of systems that privilege and promote beauty, I want to focus on the work of three feminist theorists which draws attention to "the complexly and densely institutionalized *system* of values and practices within which girls and women--and, increasingly, men and boys--come to believe that they are nothing...unless they are trim, tight, lineless, bulgeless, and sagless" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 32). These works are Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*; Kathryn Pauly Morgan's "Woman and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies"; and Carole Spitzack's "The Confession Mirror: Plastic Images for Surgery."

Unbearable Weight is a well-researched feminist analysis of the cultural construction of bodies that takes as its central theoretical conviction an emphasis on the materiality of the

body. For Bordo, "the body" exists in an agonized relationship to advanced consumer capitalism, in which the drive for instant gratification exists concurrently with a strong work ethic that frowns on unrestrained consumption (199). The tension between desiring and suppressing the desire to consume on impulse has created what Bordo refers to as a "postmodern conversation" (258) in which the "discourse of possibilities" (30) obscures any negative repercussions of unrestrained consumption. This discourse also valorizes science and technology, and contributes to the social myth that freedom from bodily determination is possible through technological intervention. Bordo outlines how plastic surgery, "a technology that was first aimed at the replacement of malfunctioning parts," has evolved to become "an industry and an ideology fueled by fantasies of rearranging, transforming, and correcting, an ideology of limitless improvement and change, defying the historicity, the morality, and, indeed, the very materiality of the body" (245).

In a "postmodern conversation," cosmetic surgery appears as a welcome disciplinarian to subjugate the unruly body. In such a conversation,

> All sense of history and all ability (or inclination) to sustain cultural criticism, to make the distinctions and discriminations that would permit such criticism, have disappeared. Rather, in this conversation, 'anything goes'--and any positioned social critique...is immediately destabilized. (258)

This "intoxication with possibilities" (39) completely masks the potential risks and complications involved with body transformations, and focuses instead on the fantasy of the perfect outcome. "Popular culture," Bordo asserts, "does not apply any brakes to these fantasies of rearrangement and self-transformation" (247). On the contrary, erasures of the potential side-effects of body transformations--eating disorders, exercise addictions, steroid

abuse, unsuccessful and sometimes fatal operations--help to contribute to the discourse "that is gradually changing our conception of our bodies" (Bordo 39). The discourse of possibilities promises you can have any body you want. However, not *any* body is acceptable; rather, the desired body is an homogenized image of beauty. If "any body" is in fact *one* body, then how much choice is really involved?

In "Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies," Kathryn Pauly Morgan provides an insightful discussion of how cosmetic surgery is no longer viewed as a service for the "pathologically narcissistic," but is now a "normal" procedure useful for the maintenance of self-esteem. This change, she suggests, is "leading to a predictable inversion of the domains of the deviant and the pathological" (28), and consequently may create a climate in which women who choose *not* to have surgery "will increasingly be stigmatized and seen as deviant" (28). To critique this disturbing trend, she identifies three paradoxes that traditionally ground women's decisions to undergo cosmetic surgery.

The first paradox is that "what looks like an optimal situation of reflection, deliberation, and self-creating choice often signals conformity at a deeper level" (36). More often than not, she writes, "what appear at first glance to be instances of choice turn out to be instances of conformity" (36). Individuals who undergo cosmetic surgery are not choosing their "own" unique look (for example, a more "ethnic" nose); instead, they are conforming to contemporary beauty ideals, but this conformity is represented as agency, as an empowering act.

The second paradox bound up with choice involves the "rhetoric of liberation and care" (38). Like the postmodern conversation or the rhetoric of reformation, this rhetoric

entices one to "be all that you can be," or to "make the most of yourself." Again, however, Morgan illustrates that this transformation is often undertaken for the approval of "the Other--the lover, the taunting students, the customers, the employers, the social peers" (38). Put another way, making the most of yourself entails becoming like someone else, which "is almost always affected by the dominant culture, which is male-supremacist, racist, ageist, heterosexist, anti-Semitic, ableist and class-biased" (38).

Morgan's third paradox reveals that "the technological beauty imperative and the pathological inversion of the normal are coercing more and more women to 'choose' cosmetic surgery" (41). As technologies of beauty fall increasingly under the rubric of medical science, their association with trained professionals enables promoters to market medical procedures as "new" and "advanced" technological breakthroughs. The result, Morgan contends, is a growing pressure "to achieve perfection through technology" (39). Terms such as "elective" and "cosmetic" obscure the fact that aesthetic surgery is becoming a necessity, not a choice. The term "elective," then, "performs a seductive role in facilitating the ideological camouflage of the *absence of choice*" (39). Equally misleading when used in conjunction with surgery is the term "cosmetic," because it "serves an ideological function in hiding the fact that the changes are *noncosmetic*: they involve lengthy periods of pain, are permanent, and result in irreversibly alienating metamorphoses such as the appearance of youth on an aging body" (38-9). This new form of eugenics obscures its own production to the extent that persons who choose cosmetic surgery believe they are consciously making an independent choice.

Having identified three paradoxes that provide the *illusion* that an individual exercises agency and choice, Morgan goes on to offer two strategies for actively resisting the

rhetoric of reformation surrounding cosmetic surgery: the response of refusal, and the response of appropriation. The response of refusal requires women to become self-educated in the realm of cosmetic surgery, and requires that they fully understand the nature of the risks involved; it assumes, however, that women will find such medical interventions to be oppressive and/or shocking. This means of resistance, Morgan admits, "is unlikely to have much impact in the current ideological and cultural climate" (43).

Morgan's strong emphasis on education in the response of refusal does not adequately address the complicated interplay between intellect and emotion that often influences a woman's decision to have surgery. Spitzack's article, "The Confession Mirror: Plastic Images For Surgery," highlights this issue. Curious to learn more about cosmetic surgery, Spitzack makes use of a free consultation with a cosmetic surgeon as part of her field research. She is surprised, however, to discover how psychologically painful the visit proves to be. With all of her feminist acumen, her wealth of knowledge about cosmetic surgery and the role of the physician as confessor,[16] Spitzack trusts that her critical faculties will keep her from scheduling a surgical appointment. However, discourses of beauty go far beyond a cerebral understanding, and Spitzack's experience illustrates that education and/or knowledge do not guarantee freedom. She enters the surgeon's office with her self-confidence intact; however, a transformation occurs during the visit. She describes her feelings as follows:

> I make a quick exit, head lowered, refusing to look at the fashion models hung on walls or the immaculate-while-motionless receptionist. My entire being seems deficient, in spite of myself, apart from my critical sensibilities. My body is cumbersome. It does not want to move. Each step pulls me in two

different directions: toward me and away from me. Two women sit in the waiting room, laughing. I am certain that I am the object of their laughter. (48)

Spitzack's alienated feelings toward her body suggest that Morgan's "response of refusal" is not a viable means of resistance. If becoming educated about the horrors of cosmetic surgery purportedly brings liberation from the desire to go under the knife, then Spitzack should be a stellar example of a woman readily able to adopt the "response of refusal." But, however one reads her testimony to the contrary, it is clear that the rhetoric of reformation goes far beyond an intellectual understanding of how the discourses of beauty create feelings of anxiety about the body, and of how these discourses contribute to a fragmentation and narcissism that can be defined as an "*infatuation with an inferiorized body*" (Bartky 40).

Morgan's second strategy of resistance is "the response of appropriation." "Rather than viewing the womanly/technologized body as a site of political refusal," she argues, "the response of appropriation views it as the site for feminist action through transformation, appropriation, parody, and protest" (44). This response grows out of a feminist tradition that destabilizes "natural" representations by using repetition as a means of resistance, and reiteration as a means of turning discourses back onto themselves in a liberating feminist politics.[17] The response of appropriation "advocates appropriating the expertise and technology" of cosmetic surgery "for feminist ends" (44-45). Morgan contends that women with "a feminist understanding of cosmetic surgery are in a situation to deploy cosmetic surgery in the name of its feminist potential for parody and protest" (45).

Within the response of appropriation, Morgan outlines two forms of revolt that are "performance-oriented" (45). The first is to modify the way we think of "ugly" and all the pejorative definitions that are associated with it. This response might involve using "*the technology of cosmetic surgery*" to gain this ugliness (46). As Morgan notes,

> What this feminist performance would require would be not only genuine celebration of but *actual* participation in the fleshly mutations needed to produce what the culture constitutes as 'ugly' so as to destabilize the 'beautiful' and expose its techno-logically and culturally constitutive origin and its political consequences. (46)

Attempting to find feminists to engage willingly in processes that render them ugly is indeed challenging. Finding surgeons to participate in this uglifying process would prove equally difficult. However, this form of revolt concretely illustrates the degree to which cosmetic surgery is concerned with beauty. Creating an unaesthetic look by the same technology used to manufacture beauty highlights both our culture's obsession with beauty and its intolerance of difference. However, one would have to go to garish lengths for people to recognize that ugliness had been deliberately and technologically created, and was not a congenital defect or the result of an accident.

Orlan and the Slaughter-House of Beauty

Orlan comes very close to enacting Morgan's response of appropriation. A French "automutalative" performance artist, Orlan uses technology and the media to impress her art upon the public. From videos, photographs, billboards, and faxes, Orlan appropriates the telecommunications network to create an art form for the 21st Century. Since 1990 she has

undergone seven elective surgeries with the goal of making herself look like a computer-generated "ideal" of beauty, "pieced together not from spare body parts" of random ideals of beauty, "but from art-historical references"; when her project is complete, she will have "the forehead of the Mona Lisa, the eyes of a School of Fontainebleau Diana, the nose of Gerome's Psyche, the lips of Boucher's Europa, and the chin of Botticelli's Venus" (*Artforum* 90). As Barbara Rose notes in "Is It Art? Orlan and the Transgressive Act," Orlan's "art" demonstrates that if the body parts of many different "ideal" women are required to obtain beauty, "Orlan consciously chooses to undergo the necessary mutilation to reveal that the objective is unattainable and the process horrifying" (125).

Orlan's work also illustrates that contemporary means of acquiring beauty are in fact acts of mutilation. In 1993, after much searching, Orlan finally found a cosmetic surgeon who agreed to operate *not* with the intention of aesthetically *improving* her looks, but with the understanding that the operation would make her somewhat freakish in appearance. In Jim McClellan's "Written on the Body," Orlan explains that the male cosmetic surgeons she previously worked with had never been receptive to her wilder designs because they "wanted to keep [her] cute" (98). But finding a feminist cosmetic surgeon (an oxymoron?), Dr. Marjorie Kramer, has enabled Orlan to move beyond the "cute" replication of beauty ideals. With Kramer, Orlan picked up her "horns." The surgeon complied with Orlan's wishes and inserted as many implants above her eyebrows as her face could hold. Orlan now "looks as if she's beginning to sprout horns" (McClellan 96). Orlan's next scheduled operation involves even more drastic alterations; she plans to have her nose "built up into a huge bulbous hooter" (McClellan 98).

But how, if at all, is Orlan's project, entitled *"The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan,"* revolutionary? Is the "response of appropriation" political enough that it requires people to reevaluate the nature of homogenized beauty and the role cosmetic surgery plays in its continuation? Can we assume that Orlan's "performances" are indeed meant to deter would-be cosmetic surgeon patients?

Orlan's "performances" take place in the operating room, which becomes a theatre set, replete with sterilized props (such as the mandatory crucifix), and costumes (she persuades the medical staff to wear outrageous designer gowns). In the video of her liposuction operation, "Orlan lay smiling on an operating table, reading from psychoanalytic texts, while a surgeon sawed away grimly at her buttocks" (McClennan 97). During her operations she insists on being conscious, "to direct and choreograph the actions, so the operations take place under local rather than general anesthesia" (Rose 86). This insistence gives the audience the added discomfort of witnessing an operation being performed on an alert patient--one who always plays to the camera. Moreover, her performances do not stop in the operating room. During her post-operative period, she photographs her body in its various stages of recovery and, as a result, many surgeons refuse to work with her. As McClellan notes, "the post-op pictures of Orlan's bruised, swollen face are troubling, more troubling than the vaguely camp slice and dice of her videos, and go to provide perhaps the strongest evidence that her work does, as she claims, add up to some kind of serious critique" (99). Indeed, in the post-operative photographs the violence of cosmetic surgery is obvious: she could well be a trauma victim who had been beaten. This juxtaposition of violence with beauty exposes that cosmetic surgery is bound up with destructive (or unattainable) beauty ideals.

Many critics have expressed serious reservations about Orlan's work. Indeed, an entire issue of a French journal of mental health was devoted to questioning her sanity.[18] But Orlan takes issue with those who believe her engagement in masochistic behaviour is merely a response to patriarchal structures of oppression. She insists that her work has a feminist side that offers a "critique of the idea of ideal beauty, of the limited aesthetic standards and hyperfemale stereotypes of the cosmetic surgery business" (McClellan 99). In so doing, she exposes Morgan's rather naive assumption that feminists do not have cosmetic surgery, or that they are somehow immune to cultural ideologies that reward beauty. While Orlan's "performances" cannot be classified as a "response of appropriation" (her uglifying process condones cosmetic surgery as an industry), they certainly shock viewers into a more complete understanding of the mutilation/beautification process.

If Orlan's work can be called feminist (an issue I will return to later), its power stems from exposing what is normally kept behind the scenes--the actual flesh and blood realities of the surgical procedures--as well as the gruesome post-operative photographs of her bruised and swollen body. In effect, she takes us through the slaughter-house of beauty, revealing in minute detail the full consequences behind the quest for the physical ideal. According to Rose, "Orlan's brutal, blunt and sometimes gory imagery flatters neither herself nor the public; it transmits disquieting and alarming signals of profound psychological and social disorder" (87). By sending images of her performance via satellite to various locations (Paris, Toronto, Tokyo, etc.), Orlan makes certain of an audience's presence. Thus these disturbing images are not contained within the operating room, but are witnessed by countless viewers across the world.

The spectator, then, also endures the "pain" of Orlan's operation. In *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Difference*, Parveen Adams describes "the suspense of horror" in watching *Omnipresence*, one of Orlan's operations (159). The surgeon inserts a number of needles into Orlan's face. Slowly the scalpel slices the skin from around her ear. A flap is carved and the skin is lifted to reveal the raw flesh below. It glistens; it bleeds. The anguish of the spectator, Adams argues, comes from discovering that "the face is *detachable*" (143), and that the "distinction between the inside and the outside" has been destroyed (156). Orlan demonstrates that the face really is a mask. Thus she challenges the "economy of cosmetic surgery," Adams maintains, which is "towards completeness" (145). In other words, until a patient has a particular operation, she feels herself to be incomplete. In contrast, Orlan's performances undo this "triumph of representation"--the "narcissistic fantasy that the face 'represents' something" (Adams 145). Instead, the face becomes a malleable piece of bloody flesh that can be separated from its moorings.

Orlan leaves us with the troubling question of whether we are dealing with art or, as Rose queries, with "illustrated psychopathology" (125). Is Orlan really critiquing "the idea of ideal beauty" (McClellan 99)? Is she engaged in a feminist polemic to illustrate the lengths women will go for beauty? I would like to say yes, but as her work progresses, it becomes more clear that Orlan actively supports the use of surgical interventions to alter the body. Carey Lovelace pursues Orlan's political commitments in "Orlan: Offensive Acts" and clarifies that Orlan "seems veritably positive" on the role of cosmetic surgery (13). "'In future times," Orlan proclaims, "we'll change our bodies as easily as our hair colour'" (Lovelace 13-14). Again, she obliterates the outside and the inside, equating changing one's facial structures to dyeing one's hair. Far from being revolutionary, then, the same woman

who takes us through the slaughter-house of beauty in fact supports its technological possibilities.

But a dissident reading of Orlan's "performances" provides us with another script. If she promotes a kind of bodily freedom through surgical intervention, by showing both the operative procedures and the post-operative recuperation periods she discourages the majority of viewers. At the London Institute of Contemporary Art, for example, Orlan showed a graphic video of the surgeries she has undergone. During question period, she was accosted by a hostile audience member who remarked: "You're just like the sickest person I've ever seen....You're just rubbish. All this is about is shocking the bourgeoisie. It makes me want to give you a good slap" (McClellan 96). Similar responses from other audiences indicate that while people desire beauty, they prefer the space between the "Before" and "After" to remain hidden.

Perhaps Orlan disturbs viewers not only because of her graphic portrait of body mutilations, but also because of her cavalier attitudes towards surgery. No matter what her views, Orlan's graphic representations of cosmetic surgery will disgust more than a few onlookers. Yet the boundary she transgresses involves more than just beauty; by turning trauma into theatre, she violates the privacy of bodies and questions their "wholeness." For Orlan, the body is an accessory, a canvas for experimental creativity. Yet it is easy to question her motivation, for if she is truly attempting to encourage viewers to embrace such bodily experimentation, then why does she insist upon such shock-value?[19] With *The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan*, in more ways than one, she places herself on the cutting edge of the transforming/performing body.

But a feminist analysis of Orlan must be critical of her desire to make cosmetic surgery fashionable. Although she insists that she does not want to represent "a new standard of beauty" and that she is against "the dictates of a dominant ideology" (Norris 40), at what point will Orlan's "non-conformist" work be absorbed as a new trend? At a recent party in the United States, Orlan confesses that she was "approached by twenty boys wanting 'bumps'" [horns] and wanting her to arrange surgeries for them with her surgeon (Norris 40). Orlan's multiple surgeries play right into consumer capitalism's drive for the continual production of new images to stimulate desire. There is no transformative politics here; on the contrary, Orlan's performing body is in fact a consuming body, one that requires economic advantage to have a role in the performance.

Within a capitalist system that requires the continuous stimulation of "new" products and services, Morgan's "response of appropriation" proves ineffectual. If Orlan is any indication, even "uglifying" oneself can encourage others to follow similar consumptive routes. What is missing from Morgan's overall analysis of cosmetic surgery is a critique of the inequalities of privilege, money, and time that prohibit most people from indulging in these practices. While she acknowledges that her two suggested means of resistance[20] are "utopian feminist political responses" (25), her critique of cosmetic surgery ultimately takes a ludic turn when she offers parody as a potential means of subversion. For as Ebert questions, "is subversiveness itself an effective intervention in the order of patriarchal capitalism?" (168). An active critique of cosmetic surgery turns not to parody for a rearrangement of the existing order (surgery to uglify rather than to beautify), but to a serious critique of the economic losses both men and women suffer from buying into the fantasy of

alterations, the physical pain involved in transforming the body, and the exorbitant profits made by the medical profession.

Counter-arguments

The work of Wolf, Faludi, Bordo, Morgan and Spitzack documents the ways in which cosmetic surgery is a profoundly debilitating practice for women (and men)--economically, physically, and psychically. Nowhere do they boast of the positive aspects of this "elective" surgery. However, two feminist theorists, Anne Balsamo and Kathy Davis, discuss the potentially liberating possibilities this technology offers. In "On the Cutting Edge: Cosmetic Surgery and the Technological Production of the Gendered Body," Balsamo voices her concern that "biotechnologies" are ideologically shaped to service "traditional gendered patterns of power and authority" (208).[21] However, instead of looking at the discourses that promote cosmetic surgery as being gender specific, Balsamo suggests that they are functioning to eradicate gender difference altogether. She asks:

> what about the possibility that men and women are becoming more alike with respect to 'the body beautiful,' that men are engaging more frequently in female body activities, or even simply that a concern with appearance is not solely a characteristic of women? What about the possibility that the boundary between genders is eroding? (217)

To suggest that cosmetic surgery might function to erode "the boundary between the genders" is an interesting premise. However, while men and women purchase similar surgery procedures (liposuction, tummy tucks, and other forms of body sculpting), much of the surgery continues to be gender-specific and thus *enhances* the differences between the sexes

(such as breast implants, penile enlargements, pectoral implants etc.). In other words, while the discourses might appear to be erasing gender differences, surgeons operate with fixed ideological views about the inscriptions of femininity and masculinity. And although facial surgery on homosexual males quite often involves making their features appear "more feminine," the majority of cosmetic surgery involves the *material* inscription of gender onto the body, which is ideologically determined largely in relation to which sexed body is being altered. In short, the sexed body ultimately determines what gendered features are inscribed onto it.

Balsamo recognizes that cosmetic surgery "enacts a form of cultural signification where we can examine the literal and material reproduction of an ideal of beauty" (209). She believes, therefore, that medical interventions offer a provocative site for a discussion of the cultural construction of the gendered body. Yet she does not unequivocally support all the practices of cosmetic surgery. In the epilogue of her latest work, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*, Balsamo acknowledges that "Technological practices such as bodybuilding, cosmetic surgery, and virtual reality depend on and indeed contribute to the repression, conceptual fragmentation, and commodification of the material body" (159). Yet instead of identifying such practices as contributors to women's oppression, her criticisms of cosmetic surgery remain limited to a concern for how it manufactures fixed gendered identities. In other words, how it "reinscribes dominant narratives of gender identity on the material body" (*Technologies* 160).

Technologies of the Gendered Body contains the article on cosmetic surgery that Balsamo published four years earlier ("On the Cutting Edge"). Surprisingly, in light of her epilogue's argument that technological practices contribute to the commodification of

bodies, she does little editing of her original article, an article which suggests that we think of cosmetic surgery as "fashion surgery." "Like women who get pierced-nose earrings, tattoos, and hair sculptures," she writes, "women who elect cosmetic surgery could be seen to be using their bodies as a vehicle for staging cultural identities" ("Cutting" 226). In my view, however, such a statement unfairly constructs an analogous relationship between cosmetic surgery and body piercing and/or tattooing; women who engage in unusual forms of body modification such as tattooing, cutting, piercing, and branding, are often acting out *against* a cultural ideal of beauty. As such, their actions are not conformist, *per se*, in that they do not replicate homogenized ideals.

In spite of the recent popularity in body piercing and tattooing, arising in part from a resurgent Punk sub-culture, the initial "resistance" embodied by such unorthodox body modifications has been neutralized by a larger public fascination with the erotics of tattoos and body piercing. This fascination has been generated by capitalism's perpetual need to expand beauty in "new" and exciting directions. As Bordo argues, "Consumer capitalism depends on the continual production of novelty, of fresh images to stimulate desire, and it frequently drops into marginalized neighborhoods in order to find them" (*Unbearable* 25). Balsamo's belief that both men and women experiment with various body technologies as "a vehicle for staging cultural identities" completely ignores the market influences that encourage them to pursue *specific* identities.

For example, a recent article in *The Edmonton Journal* highlights the economic incentives that influence people's choices to undergo surgery. The headline caught my attention: "Boomers fear job prospects are skin deep" (Norman B5). The article reported how many "fifty-somethings" are increasingly seeking ways to prolong their youthful appearance

because of age discrimination in the workplace. Corporate downsizing has left middle-aged workers competing for jobs with people half their age, and cosmetic surgery strategically offers a way to level the playing field. The article illustrates the very "real" economic factors that make cosmetic surgery appealing. It also demonstrates how changing employment patterns engender an obsession with physical appearance. As David Harvey writes, capitalists appropriate new image systems for their own purposes, and competition for employment in a changing global market provides the perfect setting for capitalists to encourage an increase in consumer consumption of services. My point remains that an analysis of beauty pursuits or the adoption of specified images must be tied to an investigation into economics.

Balsamo further removes the possibility for an economic discussion by referring to cosmetic surgery as "fashion surgery." Again, is it purely for "fashion" that men and women undergo surgery, or are there real economic benefits attached to body alterations? How does using the adjective "fashion" differ from the de-politicization that occurs when "cosmetic" or "elective" are joined to surgery? Balsamo elides these issues and instead critiques feminism for not embracing new body technologies. Feminists, she asserts, need "to abandon our romantic conceptions of the 'natural' body--conceptions that lead us to claim that a surgically refashioned face inevitably marks an oppressed subjectivity" ("Cutting Edge" 226). In other words, feminists need to "get with the times" and stop resisting change.

While I agree that feminist criticism, when it criticizes women (and/or feminists) who have cosmetic surgery, unfairly risks labelling patients cultural dopes, I also believe that we must be critical of the socioeconomic factors that *create* an environment in which having surgery seems like a logical choice to make. Substituting the gross body for the "natural"

body helps circumvent the charges of romanticism that Balsamo makes, for the gross body alludes not to a "natural" and pre-ordained body, but to a body before alterations, before it becomes plastic. Clearly, piercing ears, dyeing hair, and having braces on the teeth are not "natural" to the body. Nor is it "natural" for all men and women to be slim, to be muscular, to be of a certain height, to have similar features, etc. But I insist on the need to challenge the social usefulness of this "new" medical technology. I want, therefore, to draw a line between having one's ears pierced and having one's face lifted, or dyeing one's hair and having breast implants inserted or penis ligaments severed. I draw this line *not* to separate the "enlightened" ones from the "victims," but in order to highlight the psychic anguish and the physical pain and mutilation involved in choosing to have more invasive body alterations. Balsamo's "fashion surgery" eradicates the physical and mental pain, and ignores an economic discussion of oppression.

Like Balsamo's desire to move away from the "natural" body to avoid charging women who choose surgery with "false consciousness," Kathy Davis views cosmetic surgery as "first and foremost, about being ordinary, taking one's life in one's own hands, and determining how much suffering is fair" ("Remaking" 23). But who decides what is "ordinary," and what constitutes "suffering"?[22] By suggesting that women want to be "ordinary," Davis bases her argument on the assumption that being "ugly" is the problem. However, she spends little time investigating the proliferation of cultural discourses that privilege beauty, or medical discourses that actively promote surgical options. In sum, Davis fails to find fault with a system that causes women to "suffer" because they do not measure up to current homogenized standards of beauty. Feminism has taken a strange turn when

cosmetic surgery is described as "first and foremost...about taking one's life into one's hands." For as Bordo argues, the focus needs to be turned *away* from "individuals and their choices," and be redirected towards a "critical edge of systemic perspective" (*Unbearable* 31-32). We must continually remind ourselves that capitalism *creates the illusion* of choice; simply put, it encourages us to make decisions based on the belief that we act according to a free will that exists outside of social pressures to conform.

Both Balsamo and Davis, by suggesting that cosmetic surgery can be potentially liberating, make the mistake of assuming that an individual can act in isolation from larger cultural ideologies. But as Sinfield reminds us, the same structures that form individuals also form society. In other words, "choosing" cosmetic surgery cannot be merely an individual act because an individual cannot exercise agency in isolation from larger cultural forces. Indeed, to support a strong belief in individual agency is to lose sight of how individual acts affect the collective. Sinfield uses the automobile to illustrate this point: "thinking of ourselves as essentially individual tends to efface processes of cultural production and, in the same movement, leads us to imagine ourselves to be autonomous, self-determining" (37). If each of us buys a car, individually, we do not do much damage to the planet. "But from that position," he argues, "it is hard to get to address, much less do anything about, whether we should be living in an automobile culture at all" (37). Similarly, if a woman has a facelift, individually she might not be doing much damage to herself or to the cultural environment in which she lives; but if we only assess individual actions, it becomes impossible to critique whether we should accept living in a surgical age at all. Changing the external body by inscribing cultural codes of beauty onto it is not the key to living in a society that privileges the beautiful. Where does it end? Will body technologies become unacceptable when large

numbers of women have sex-change operations to reap the benefits of a patriarchal society? Will they become unacceptable when genetic engineering selects only "Aryan" notions of beauty for the genetically programmed family? There are any number of possible routes for beauty technology to go, and I find all of them frightening.

Brian D'Amato explores the frightening theme of how far people will go for beauty in his contemporary thriller *Beauty*. His protagonist, Jamie Angelo, is an ex-Yale pre-med student who is part artist and part alchemist. A renegade cosmetic surgeon, he uses a synthetic skin substitute to remake the faces of film-stars and models. Because the "skin" is not licensed, he performs surgery "underground" in his living room. The recipients of his new product go on to achieve phenomenal success and adoration, based largely on their stunning (and somewhat "exotic") beauty. He is not God, we are told, but he is close. In fact, he views himself as a modern-day Michelangelo (31). In time, however, the synthetic skin begins to disintegrate, and more than one actress is forced into seclusion because of her destroyed beauty. Eventually, Jamie's creations turn on him, just as the monster in *Frankenstein* turns on its creator. Indeed, *Beauty* is one of the few modern novels that so closely explores the implicit links between the Frankenstein and Pygmalion myths, and between artists and cosmetic surgeons.

Even when, as in the case with D'Amato and Weldon, the fictional representations of cosmetic surgery veer toward the parodic and outlandish, they nevertheless convey important messages about contemporary culture, for they expose the cultural romance surrounding cosmetic surgery--the myth that medical technology can accomplish anything--and they illustrate the social expectations that have been unleashed by surgical promises of beauty.

More disturbingly, they indicate the extent to which people are willing to invest in medical technology, even when its success rate remains unproven. Indeed, by removing the "real" skin of his female clients and replacing it with a faulty synthetic substitute, *Beauty's* protagonist effectively destroys the health and economic prospects of the women whose livelihood depends largely on their appearance.

Like fiction, autobiography can also highlight the inherent dangers of oppressive socioeconomic systems. The importance and power of autobiography rests in its affirmation that the outside world (culture), necessarily plays a role in the construction of individual subjectivity. As such, autobiography diminishes the distance between the reader's engagement with the text and the protagonist's actions and emotions. As Philippe Lejeune writes in *On Autobiography*, the most important feature of an autobiography is "identity," the assertion that the author and the narrator are identical, and that the narrator and the protagonist are identical. This is the "autobiographical pact,"[23] a promise to the reader that the textual and referential "I" are the same. In brief, this quality of truth-telling distinguishes autobiography from fiction.

The degree to which autobiography can be "truthful" in its telling has been the subject of many scholarly debates, and the topic is too large to be represented here. From the poststructuralist articulations that the "I" is a trope or linguistic sign that is therefore unrepresentable (de Man, Sprinker), to the feminist assertions that the "I" politically locates the lives of oppressed groups within patriarchy (Hartsock 1990, Smith), the general consensus about the constructedness of the subject remains that the "truthfulness" can only be related as a series of misrepresentations because memory is ephemeral and therefore suspect. If the autobiographical subject is a woman, there is another set of cultural norms that

must be overcome.[24] Can any writer recreate his or her life without an element of fiction working its way in? Nonetheless, the semblance of "truth" portrayed in the genre of autobiography is given greater credence than its fictional literary counterparts. Reading about Ruth's pain in Weldon's novel, for example, and reading about the author/narrator/protagonist's pain in an autobiography are two different matters. The latter carries a much heavier weight, as it purports to convey a truthful account of the author's retrospective emotions.

La Bâtarde

When Violette Leduc's autobiography, *La Bâtarde*, hit the book stores in 1964, it was labelled "the most controversial event of the Paris literary season" (de Courtivron i). Leduc's frank confessions of lesbian love, her explicit descriptions of repeated personal humiliations, her obsessions with homosexual men, her acute paranoia--all these elements contributed to the controversy. Here was a woman writing with intensity about subject matters that were hardly "traditional." Yet it was not her sexual preferences that ultimately separated her from society and defined her subjectivity, but her obsession with her ugliness.

La Bâtarde demonstrates how, in a patriarchal system that rewards femininity and beauty, women's fears of ugliness are not founded on narcissistic preoccupations, but on very real economic issues. As Francette Pacteau writes in *The Symptom of Beauty*, "no woman escapes 'beauty'. Unavoidably, from her earliest years, beauty will be either attributed or denied to her. If she does not have it, she may hope to gain it; if she possesses it, she will certainly lose it" (14). Like *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, *La Bâtarde* is largely

about the mental anguish involved in being *denied* beauty--the "Lucky Dip"--and Violette Leduc's perpetual attempts to attain it.

Leduc's self-proclaimed ugliness profoundly defines her sense of self. In "'An Appearance Walking in a forest the sexes burn': Autobiography and the Construction of the Feminine Body," Shirley Neuman demonstrates how the "exteriority of [Violette's] body produces her interiority as subject" (7). According to Neuman, "the inscription of Violette's body as feminine, because female, and as punishingly ugly, and therefore not-feminine, produces her self-loathing and her self-fragmentation" (8). Indeed, Violette fixates on her physical inadequacies as a woman, and the narrative demonstrates the tyranny of the beautification process. The book is not an easy read. Leduc's stark and intimate descriptions of her self-hatred form a painful account of how much appearance plays a role in the creation of subjectivity.

La Bâtarde does not parody the fashion and beauty industries; rather it discloses how women's bodies are inscribed as feminine, and, through its discussion of magazines, it chronicles how the categories of "beautiful" and "ugly" are culturally determined.[23] Whereas Weldon's novel satirizes a culture that develops cosmetic surgery to erase difference, Leduc's autobiography reveals a woman's desperate desire to attain the promises held out by the beauty industry; in order to improve her looks, Violette "buys into" the belief that fashion and beauty products will make her beautiful. Instead, she discovers that beauty is an unattainable objective locked in a pattern of consumerism and disappointment.

Leduc takes us to the cultural site where the rhetoric of reformation is most successfully produced and deployed--fashion magazines. For a more sophisticated understanding of the complex signifying system of fashion, I turn to Roland Barthes's *The*

Fashion System. This highly detailed semiotic study of the fashion system illuminates, in part, Violette's whole-hearted submission to fashion magazines. According to Barthes, the reader of fashion must negotiate a complicated interplay between the seemingly frivolous nature of fashion and the extremely serious manner in which women adhere to it. In other words, the reader must be aware of her "frivolous" hobby, but simultaneously must be the serious student, eager to learn (Barthes 242).

Caught in the tension between the frivolous and the serious, Violette blindly follows the seductive subtlety with which fashion writing and photographic images convey a sense of leisured privilege and work. Barthes analyses how depictions of labour in fashion are reduced to *"the vision of doing,"* so that "work is only a simple reference, it provides identity, then immediately loses its reality" (252-253). For example, the fashion worn by the secretary, librarian or student conveys *not* a technical skill (the woman who types), but rather a privileged being in a work situation. "This sort of distance," Barthes argues, "between the work *situation* and its technical unreality allows the woman of Fashion to be simultaneously moral (for work is a value) and idle (for work would sully her)" (253). Thus the only labour involved in this work *situation* is the labour invested in obtaining the image. By exercising her knowledge of fashion, "even through fantasies of the most improbable luxury, the woman always seems *to be doing something*" (Barthes 254).

Hence, even when Violette, unemployed and reading fashion magazines all day, waits for her lover, Hermine, to return home, she is "doing something." Her obsession with the promises offered by *Vogue*, *Fémina* and *Le Jardin des Modes* proves Barthes's hypothesis that the "vision of doing" is the labour of fashion. Violette becomes the child filled with the desire for unrestrained consumption. The following is a short list of Violette's

"wants": "I wanted the impossible: the eyes, the complexion, the hair, the nose, as well as the self-assurance, the arrogance of the mannequins" (166); "I wanted to be more beautiful" (190); and "I wanted to be rejuvenated at twenty-four" (190). The magazines both encourage and direct her consuming energies.

La Bâtarde exposes the labour of fashion, or Barthes's "vision of doing," not as a leisure pursuit, but as unpaid labour that requires a large time and monetary investment. Violette commits herself to studying the rhetoric of reformation in magazines:

> Head in hands, I pored anxiously over experts' advice and advertisements alike. Wrinkles, crow's feet, flaking skin, blackheads, cellulitis....Page after page, I read and reread my blackheads, my wrinkles, my enlarged pores, my falling hair. Page after page I suffered and would not look at myself" (190).

Instead of inspiring hope, the rhetoric of reformation, which promises the *possibility* of attaining beauty, contributes to self-loathing, for "*not* to be beautiful is to fail to take advantage of possibilities, and is, therefore, a woman's own fault" (Neuman 8). Through magazines, Violette reads about her negligence, learns all about her "blackheads, [her] wrinkles, [her] enlarged pores."

In *Face Value: The Politics of Beauty*, Robin Lakoff and Raquel Scherr provide a well-researched history of *Vogue* magazine. Initially, they write, *Vogue* "did not dictate trends, or define beauty, it merely recorded what was already there" (77). Unlike today's magazines that only use top models to display both fashion and products, *Vogue* originally "drew its models from the ranks of high society" (75). Professional models were employed solely to sell products, and it was not until the 1930s that they began to gain a new status, "one which acknowledged the value of their photogenic beauty and their central role in

building the make-believe of elegance that *Vogue* featured" (80-81). At this time, beauty became a ticket to wealth and status rather than the effect of wealth.

Violette is caught in this transitional world. She becomes obsessed with fashion magazines in 1931; she feels mesmerized by the pictures of high-society women such as Lady Abdy, but also admits her infatuation with the lives of the mannequins (models). Hence, Violette is caught between the world of high-society women, a reality that is "already there" (Lakoff and Scherr 77), and the world of mannequins, a fiction that is represented as reality. The tension between the "real" world and the fictional world typifies the fashion magazine reading experience. As Violette confesses, magazines "took [her] by their intimate light into the mysterious world of high fashion" (191). This false sense of inclusion is seductive indeed, because while the beauty in magazines is more often than not unattainable, the intimate *knowledge* of *how to* gain this beauty creates a sense of inclusion that readers desperately hold onto. By reading fashion magazines Violette lives in the world of high fashion, even while she remains hopelessly removed from it.

In fact, one of the most poignant moments in the autobiography takes place when Violette transgresses this separation and attempts to be included in the world of high fashion. She travels to an haute-couture boutique and buys a Schiaparelli suit on sale. But even as she models her new look on the streets of Paris, she knows she is an imposter, impersonating beauty. As she walks, her internal voice imagines how others see her: "carries herself well, walks well. Then comes my face, then comes the surprise, the shock" (205). And later, when Violette makes an appointment at the salon of the hairdresser who styles Lady Abdy's hair, her internal voice punishes her for having the desire to imitate the beauty of a famous woman. "Baboon, a voice roared inside [her], do you presume to tread in the steps of one of

the city's most beautiful women?" (210). Lady Abdy has been featured in the magazines that Violette is "intimate" with, but the belief that she might become a part of that world is reprehensible, and she knows it.

The beauty industry trains bodies to become fragmented and to fixate on specific flaws. Violette believes that her nose is her barrier to beauty. Even when she attains the physique of a model (at one point in the narrative we are informed that Violette is 5'7" and weighs only 106 pounds [360]), her nose excludes her from attaining perfection: "My big nose is pressed against the florist's window, my big nose...that big nose" (199). One evening, while walking in her Schiaparelli suit, Violette passes a woman who says, "If I had a face like that I'd kill myself" (222). Violette's response is to magnify her ugliness to monstrous proportions: "My cheeks were pulling my head over to the right, then to the left. My nose. Sudden and terrifying inflation; I was sweeping the bridge with my elephant's trunk" (218). This fragmentation, equating her nose with an elephant's trunk, and the attendant belief that her monstrous nose *is* her self, signals the degree to which Violette defines herself in relation to her appearance. Readers are not surprised, therefore, when Violette, the "good" reader of magazines and consumer of beauty products, succumbs to the promises offered by technological interventions and undergoes cosmetic surgery. Indeed, she illustrates Parveen Adams' point that the "economy of cosmetic surgery is always towards completeness" (145). Violette believes she will be "complete" when she has a new nose. As she very persuasively states, "The idea of a pretty face can upset any argument" (457).

However, cosmetic surgery does not change Violette's perception of herself; if anything, it exacerbates her sense of ugliness and self-hatred: "I got out of bed, I looked in the mirror at the shapeless cushion over the middle of my face. I was frightened by my little

eyes, by the blue bruises under them. What a monster! I sighed" (458). When the dressings are finally removed, Violette does not "recognize the old woman before [her], the old woman with a big nose, the same one as before. A little less long? A little less ludicrous? It made me look older and harder" (459). Not only is she not happy with the results, she has paid "twenty thousand francs" (459) to continue to feel ugly. Violette's case suggests that no amount of external alteration would have helped her to overcome her feelings of self-loathing. In other words, beauty, as the cliché goes, is an inside job.

Yet the "beauty" of Leduc's autobiography stems from how poignantly she details her anguish in believing herself to be ugly. As Neuman points out,

> Leduc performs much more than the masquerade of her femininity. Standing within gender ideology, she also stands outside it, making visible the repressions, displacements, submissions, self-loathings, self-abnegations and abjections which are among its effects and which it represses. (21)

Her grief, solitude, personal paranoia and anguish both contribute to, and are a product of, the tyranny of the beautification process, making it difficult for an individual to "distinguish what [is] possible and what [is] impossible" (197).

Autobiography of a Face

In *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, Weldon's monstrous female (Ruth before alterations), literally, physically, and grotesquely transforms herself into an ideal image of beauty. But this transformation involves physical violence. Ruth's is not a "natural" transformation (as in the Ugly Duckling), but a surgical one. Whether Weldon's novel is a "feminist *Faust*" (114), as Pamela Katz suggests, or a wild revision of Charlotte Brontë's

Jane Eyre, as McKinstry maintains (104), it forces us to think about the relationship of beauty to success. Similarly, Leduc's autobiography, in its relentless depictions of a woman's self-loathing, clearly identifies how appearance plays a crucial role in an individual's sense of self.

Lucy Grealy's *Autobiography of a Face* provides another study of a woman who is psychically damaged because of her flawed appearance. However, unlike Leduc, whose feelings of self-loathing are, in part, imaginary--produced and magnified by the rhetoric of reformation in magazines--Grealy's facial disfigurement provides due cause for her perceived ugliness. At age nine, she developed cancer of the jaw, treatment for which began with a surgical procedure that removed half of her jawbone and left her face radically disfigured. Grealy's memoirs reflect on fifteen years of physical and mental pain, two years of intensive chemotherapy, prolonged dental work, a profound sense of isolation, thirty reconstructive operations, and the long road to self-acceptance.

Under the dictatorship of physical beauty that tyrannizes our culture, *Autobiography of a Face* details Grealy's painful search for self-acceptance. Unable to distance her internal feelings of self-worth from her disfigured exterior, Grealy's self-esteem is solidly bound to her disfigured face: "I *was* my face," she writes, "I *was* ugliness" (7). Unlike Orlan, then, who shocks audiences into a realization that the face can be detached from the body (and therefore that our identity cannot be bound to something so detachable), Grealy's many surgeries are not about "performance." In fact, they cannot even be entirely deemed cosmetic, for the operations in part are about restoring function (to facilitate eating). Yet Grealy's obsession focuses on appearance alone; feminine, yet not-feminine because of her

ugliness, she blames her face "as the tangible element of what was wrong with [her] life" (127).

While waiting for the numerous reconstructive surgeries, Grealy comforts herself by engaging in a "fantasy of relief" (177), one that involves imagining the face she was meant to have, and looking forward to the day when the surgeries will make her beautiful. Again we are reminded of Parveen Adam's statement that the "economy of cosmetic surgery is always towards completeness" (145). Yet this "fantasy of relief" is exactly what the rhetoric of reformation encourages consumers to engage in--to believe that by purchasing this product or following that diet, they will one day be beautiful. Indeed, Grealy's cancer fades to the background in favour of a discussion of ugliness. Her fantasy is not that she will be *healthy* (i.e. cancer-free), but that she will be beautiful. That Grealy's musings are based upon an actual disfigurement is of little importance when we remember that the success of beauty ideologies is contingent upon the degree to which a culture exists in a state of self-loathing. Grealy may have due cause to feel ugly, but as her autobiography makes clear, ugliness is largely divorced from physical appearance.

The degree to which women hold their appearance responsible for low self-worth becomes evident on the cosmetic surgery ward, where Grealy awaits reconstructive surgery. She gazes with envy at the women who are there for face-lifts and other minor aesthetic alterations, those who "hated their gorgeously hooked noses, their wise lines, their exquisitely thin lips." "If *I* had my original face, an undamaged face," she writes, "*I* would know how to appreciate it, know how to see the beauty of it" (187). But these women, with otherwise "normal" appearances, suffer from feelings of low self-esteem similar to those Grealy experiences with her cancer-eaten face. Certainly there is a difference in degree (a

face-lift to "enhance" appearance rather than an operation to construct a "normal" face), but women's ubiquitous identification with ugliness, "real" or imagined, illustrates that an "original" face, an "undamaged" face, is still always already flawed. Each woman waiting to undergo routine cosmetic surgery has her "original face," but in a beauty-obsessed culture, she is not allowed to "appreciate it."

The notion of an original ugliness is developed in Dean MacCannell and Juliet Flower MacCannell's "The Beauty System." A woman has a choice, they argue, between staying as she is or entering the beauty system. The force of the entire culture encourages her to enter the beauty system, for "to accept herself 'as she is' is not an easy choice" (214). "Once in the beauty system," however, "she must live an absolute contradiction: beauty is proof of ugliness" (214). Beauty, in other words, "is only ugliness in disguise" (212). Entering the beauty system negates the existence of the gross body in favour of a "new and improved" plastic body. Entering proves, in other words, that the body exists, to borrow Bartky's phrase, in a state of infatuation with an inferiorized sense of self. The beauty system thus invites women to partake in consumption, for to admit to original ugliness is to purchase products and services to conceal it.

The beauty system encourages women to believe in the "fantasy of relief," and to postpone happiness. Grealy, during the course of her thirty reconstructive operations, does just that. She learns to "postpone happiness until the next operation," because "there would always be another operation, another chance for...life to finally begin" (187). This unfailing belief in medical technology echoes the mind-set of a "scalpel slave" who seeks repeated surgeries, who lives as a perpetual cosmetic surgery patient, and whose self-scrutiny is microscopic.[26] But even when Grealy's operations are complete and her jaw is as

reconstructed as it can be, she does not feel the overwhelming joy she expected would accompany "beauty." Instead, she is left wondering, "Where was all that relief and freedom I thought came with beauty?" (204).

What is most striking about the above quotation is how hauntingly familiar it sounds. In fact, it would not be out of place in Leduc's autobiography. However, Grealy, because of her cancer, is able to have a "real" focal point upon which to locate her ugliness. Because of her disfigurement, she lives with "the threat of being made fun of" (127); yet Leduc also lives with this perceived threat (evidenced by the comment, "If I had a face like that I'd kill myself"), even though she exhibits no physical abnormality. Grealy's obsession with her "ugliness" records a familiar narrative that is most often detached from personal disfigurement. Indeed, Grealy's autobiography reveals the pervasiveness of women's self-loathing narratives, and disturbingly draws attention to how divorced feelings of "ugliness" can be from material reality.

Autobiography of a Face reinforces how important appearance is in our culture. For Grealy, being beautiful meant "living without the perpetual fear of being alone, without the great burden of isolation, which is what feeling ugly felt like" (177). But as she later recognizes, beauty "as defined by society at large, seemed to be only about who was best at looking like everyone else" (187). In a 1994 interview with Rosemary Mahoney, Grealy admits that her obsession to correct her face acted "perhaps...as a diversion. I was trying to solve the wrong problem. The effort to fix my face was just another part of my self-torture" (144). It was self-torture because of the many failed operations she endured, and for believing her life would begin once she obtained the relief from surgery.

Because Grealy's autobiography is the only text I consider wherein the protagonist/narrator is actually *forced*/expected to have reconstructive surgery, it provides a good perspective from which to measure how much "choice" is involved with cosmetic surgery. It is not my intent to diminish the pain Grealy suffered through her many operations, nor to ignore the very real complications of living disfigured in a culture increasingly obsessed with appearance; rather, I want to highlight that the pain she attributes to her disfigurement is virtually identical to the mental anguish women relay in their testimonials to purchase cosmetic surgery. Grealy's case differs because of a "real" disfigurement; therefore, nobody doubts that she will continue to place her faith in medical technology and hope for "breakthroughs in surgery" (186-87). The passages that describe her physical pain and the humilation of particular procedures are difficult to read.[27] What shines through, however, is her unwillingness to live with the "deep, bottomless grief [she] called ugliness" (180), a grief shared by many.

Notes

1. For a study of the shifting models of feminine beauty in the 20th Century see Lois K. Banner's *American Beauty*.

2. Here is a partial list of surgeries available: rhytidectomy (face-lifts); blepharoplasty (eye-lifts); rhinoplasty (nose-jobs); mentoplasty (chin and jaw surgery); cheiloplasty (lip reduction/augmentation); cheek implants; otoplasty (ear surgery); dermabrasion (parts of the face are frozen and a rotating steel brush removes the top layer of skin); chemabrasion (a chemical gives the face a first-degree burn and after some time the scab falls off, revealing smooth skin beneath); hair transplants; body sculpturing (liposuction, tummy-tucks, buttock-lifts); breast augmentation/reduction; correction of gynecomastia (formation of breasts) in males; cosmetic genital surgery (vaginal tightening, liposuction of the pubic mound, and hymen reconstruction); vulvaplasty (labia trimming for women who "protrude" too much); penile augmentation surgery (fat is liposuctioned from around the belly button, injected into the penis, and then smoothed into place, to expand the girth; or the suspensory ligament that attaches the penis to the pubic bone is partially cut, allowing the penis to come farther forward, and making it look up to an inch longer); and profileplasty (surgery to the profile to make the vertical measurement a ninety degree line, which involves moving the lower or upper part of the face forward).

3. The American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons divides the field of plastic surgery into two categories: "(1) reconstructive procedures, which restore or improve physical function and minimize disfigurement from accidents, diseases, or birth defects, and (2) cosmetic procedures, which offer elective aesthetic improvement through surgical

alterations of facial and bodily features" (qtd. in Dull and West).

4. Sir Harold Delf Gillies and Dr. D. Ralph Millard Jr. differentiate between the two in an early book on modern British surgery; in their view, "Reconstructive surgery is an attempt to return to normal; cosmetic surgery is an attempt to surpass the normal" (qtd. in Morini, xii).

5. The ethical dilemma of who is entitled to make decisions about aesthetic improvement is explored in "Accounting for Cosmetic Surgery: The Accomplishment of Gender." Here, Diana Dull and Candace West outline the central dilemma of cosmetic surgery. Whereas in reconstructive surgery surgeons are judged by their ability to "improve physical function and minimize disfigurement" (54), in cosmetic surgery "the evaluation of patients' complaints, the determination of what should be done about them, and the assessment of post-operative results" are blurred in relation to how one judges "aesthetic improvement" (54).

6. John Berger also discusses this notion of "permanent visibility" in *Ways of Seeing*. "Men look at women," he suggests, while "women watch themselves being looked at" (47).

7. Both Naomi Wolf and Susan Faludi touch on this area, but their examination is brief.

8. For an introduction into this literature see Judy Wajcman's *Feminism Confronts Technology*; Kathryn Strother Ratcliff et al's *Healing Technologies: Feminist Perspectives*; and M. Stanworth's *Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood, and Medicine*.

9. See, for example, the work in the early seventies by Shulamith Firestone.

10. Similarly, Barbara Katz Rothman argues that making choices "involves stresses and costs" (qtd. in McNeil 11). We need to remember the economic factors involved in choice, and therefore the resulting exclusionary factors involved.

11. Judith R. Kunish, in "Electronic Fetal Monitors: Marketing Forces and the Resulting Controversy," cites the electronic fetal monitor (EFM) as an example of how business and

health care practitioners are intricately linked. She argues that the "rapid acceptance of EFM into labor and delivery rooms throughout the nation was assured through a well-organized and well-executed marketing effort conducted primarily by one small company" (42).

12. See Patricia Chisholm's "The Body Builders," a recent cover-story of *Maclean's* magazine (July 8, 1996; 36-41).

13. Iatrogenic conditions, i.e. suffering caused by the medical treatments themselves, is receiving more attention in relation to reproductive technologies. For relevant feminist critiques see both Judith R. Kunish's "Electronic Fetal Monitors: Marketing Forces and the Resulting Controversy," and Elisabeth Bech-Gernsheim's "From the Pill to Test-Tube Babies: New Options, New Pressures in Reproductive Behavior."

14. The term "cultural capital" is outlined in Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction*. In relation to the body, he uses it to describe how one's body might be the object of class mobility. The body, in other words, becomes a form of capital in its own right.

15. The term "lucky dip" is used in England's national lottery when players decide to let "fate" choose their numbers rather than choosing them themselves. In this context Weldon satirically draws attention to the fact that beauty is something of a lottery.

16. Spitzack uses a Foucauldian framework of power to analyze cosmetic surgery from the perspective of the confession and surveillance. In cosmetic surgery, she argues, the "highly *material* 'illness' or physical/aesthetic imperfection is 'cured' through complex and overlapping mechanisms of confession and surveillance" (38). In this confessional process, a "patient confesses inadequacy to a physician-confessor who sees and evaluates" and the result is that "the patient is supplanted with the eye/I of the physician who functions together with the discourses of desire and consumerism" (38).

17. In *Bodies that Matter,* Judith Butler discusses the potential for subversive behaviour in gender performativity, where gender acts as an "artifice to be taken on or off" (x), and where "performing" gender draws attention to its constructedness and threatens compulsive heterosexuality (2).

18. *Revue Scientifique et Culturelle Santé Mentale*. Sept-Dec. 1991.

19. Shocking audiences has always been fundamental to Orlan's work. In an earlier show "she displayed her magnified vagina," framed by her pubic hairs "painted red, blue, and yellow." As viewers exited, "their expressions were recorded...by a video camera" (Lovelace 20).

20. Morgan's second performance-oriented revolt involves exposing the commodification of cosmetic surgery through hyperbolic appropriation and parody.

> For example, a marketing ploy would encourage men to have their penises enlarged, with slogans such as "The Penis You Were Always Meant to Have" (46). However, since penile enlargement surgery is one of the more popular operations sought, parodying the rhetoric for a male audience is not really a viable means of resistance.

21. She offers a provocative reading of the gendered discourses used to sell cosmetic surgery to both men and women. When it is sold to men, it is "explained as a shrewd business tactic: 'looking good' connotes greater intelligence, competence, and desirability as a colleague" (217). For men, she continues, there are no charges of "narcissism, vanity, and self-indulgence"; rather, a man's choice is deemed "a body management technique designed to reduce the stress of having to cope with a changing work environment, one that is being threatened by the presence of women and younger people" (217).

22. In *Plastic Surgery for Men*, the cosmetic surgeon James J. Reardon suggests that the

word "'suffering' is not a valid description" of the pain experienced after surgery (24). He believes that "the patient is usually more relaxed, knowing that he has chosen to be uncomfortable for a short time for the sake of being better off in the long run. It's a tradeoff, and most of my patients know and accept it" (24).

23. For more on this concept see Lejeune's chapter on the autobiographical pact in *On Autobiography*.

24. See both Sidonie Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, in which she discusses how women's entrance into the arena of public discourse differs from men's (44), and Carolyn Heilbrun's "Woman's Autobiographical Writings," in which she addresses how women have "internalized the 'facts' dictated to them by male psychology" (19).

25. While my analysis will not explore Violette's lesbianism or bi-sexuality, it must be said that the ideology of beauty and femininity are founded upon heterosexual systems of desire.

26. In "Scalpel Slaves Just Can't Quit," the term "scalpel slave" is coined to identify a growing number of individuals (mostly women in their late 30s and 40s) who are perpetual cosmetic-surgery patients (*Newsweek* 58).

27. For example, her body absorbs many bone and skin grafts, rendering the surgeries failures. In addition, accounts of procedures in which a balloon is inserted beneath her cheek and enlarged at intervals fills the reader with horror. Grealy lives for days with an inflated balloon under her face in order to stretch the skin over her jaw.

Chapter Two

Nó Pain No Gain: The Making of a Bodybuilder

Since the 1960s, the ego-ideal of the "perfect" body has become increasingly difficult to obtain. Due to the body's biological inability to meet this unattainable ideal through "natural" means, a growing dependence on institutionalized technologies of beauty has developed. In the previous chapter, I outlined the cultural phenomena of cosmetic surgery and critiqued the manner by which for-profit medicine creates its own patient pools. In this chapter, I continue to analyze hyperbolic representations of beauty and fitness, and to highlight the counter-discourse that operates in the gap between the "before" and "after" photographs of physical representations of beauty.

Bodybuilding is a prime example of how a gross body can be transformed into a technologized body. Whereas contemporary ideals of beauty often require at least one visit to a cosmetic surgeon's office, a pursuit of the perfect male body in the world of professional bodybuilding requires the ingestion of anabolic steroids. As Sam Fussell states in "Bodybuilder Americanus," in professional bodybuilding, "steroid use is 100%" (50). Some lifters are genetically more predisposed to achieving a muscular physique than others, but no drug-free bodybuilder can compete successfully with the steroid-enhanced bodies on the performance stage.

In this chapter, I pursue the following questions: Why is bodybuilding now enjoying a resurgence in popularity not witnessed since the touring of the strong-men in the late 19th century? What does this resurgence say about the anxieties of our pre-millennium capitalist culture? What are the socioeconomic factors that have encouraged the obsessive focus on

individuality and the belief that an altered and physically improved body is a better body? And again, how do the discourses of perfectibility encourage individuals to turn a blind eye to the potentially harmful physical and emotional side-effects of body alterations?

Since the 1960s, bodybuilding has become a growing preoccupation in North America. The obsession with the body, in particular, and with physical fitness, in general, exemplifies the capitalist credo that anything can be purchased, and the postmodern belief that anything, even the body, can be changed through access to services and commodities. I have already suggested that every quest for physical perfection must be seen on a continuum that measures the degree of one's submission to cultural ideals of beauty. Just as not everyone who is concerned with signs of aging seeks cosmetic surgery, so too not everyone who desires a more muscular physique becomes a professional bodybuilder, addicted to working out and controlling the body. However, by focusing on the more extreme pathologies, I hope to illustrate that the quest for physical perfection, even on an "amateur" level, is potentially dangerous. As Susan Bordo argues in "Reading the Male Body," to engage moderately in contemporary culture with any form of physical transformation is "a bit like wanting just a touch of anorexia nervosa" (294-95). Because the goals for physical perfection are increasingly unattainable, working out or dieting "in moderation" will not bring the individual much closer to his or her ideal. Hence my purpose in studying extreme cases is to identify how these militant discourses of possibility are becoming the norm. This chapter, then, focuses on professional bodybuilders and their obsession with muscles. I begin with a brief overview of classical perspectives on the body. From there, I devote a section to male bodybuilders. The final section deals with female bodybuilders, who demand a more complex reading, for the exaggerated muscles that signal a hyperbolic masculinity in the

male bodybuilder are more easily understood than an excess of muscle that effectually *negates* or *erases* femininity in the female bodybuilder.

Contemporary Bodies and Classical Ideals

> The new age of today is at work on a new human type. Men and women are to be more healthy, stronger: there is a new feeling of life, a new joy in life. Never was humanity in its external appearance and in its frame of mind nearer to the ancient world than it is today.
>
> Adolph Hitler[1]

From its inception, bodybuilding has attempted to place itself within a classical tradition. In the early 1920s, Charles Atlas, the father of commercialized bodybuilding, promoted his financially successful muscle-building courses by promising his clients that they would acquire a "Greek god type of physique" (Dutton 21). The "before" and "after" of the bodybuilder takes the form of the now classic reference to the skinny rake on the beach who has sand kicked in his face and who then follows Charles Atlas's toning program and bulks up--a victim no more. The 98 pound weakling transforms himself into a formidable giant of masculinity.

A quick scan through *Muscle & Fitness* or any contemporary bodybuilding magazine confirms that today's bodybuilders are still likened to works of art created by the Greeks.[2] Inside the glossy pages men flex their muscles and hold classical poses beside photographs of Greek statues. While this might seem like a harmless act of comparison, the constant juxtaposition of the perfect male body with ancient art offers some cause for concern. In the 1991 film *The Architecture of Doom*, director Peter Cohen documents the rise of Nazism in Hitler's Germany and closely aligns the notion of "pure" art to Hitler's political propaganda

that promoted an Aryan race. Arno Breker and Adolf Hildebrand, two of Hitler's "approved" artists, created for public monuments sculptures of heroic figures who embodied the strength and spirit of a superior (i.e. German) race. The film provides long lists of statues and paintings that Hitler purchased on his art shopping sprees. Yet it also documents the large portion of art that he labelled "degenerate" and had destroyed. For Hitler, "degenerate" art included any visual representations that did not depict the Aryan notion of human perfectibility. Degenerate art was also abstract art, a style which, opposed to realism, visually suggested a world not clearly ordered, and hinted at insanity or "morally questionable" values.

What is important to note about Hitler's obsession with aryan or "pure" art is how closely his ideal of physical perfection mirrored that of the Greeks. In *The Perfectible Body*, Kenneth R. Dutton argues that "the Greek predilection for physical perfection had the faults of its virtues. Whilst it glorified the well-built body, it neglected or even deprecated the infirm, the aged, the ugly, the misshapen" (33). This same neglect of and even hatred for groups of people who did not meet the standards of physical perfection can be charted through the rising anti-Semitism in Hitler's Germany. *The Architecture of Doom* contains scenes of asylums overrun with people who do not meet the aryan ideal of perfection: the insane, the homeless, the elderly, the non-German. Moreover, the Greek obsession with bodily perfection and the Aryan ideal both have at their base a disgust, intolerance, and even horror of the aging and "sick" body, as well as of the "non-standard" body.

According to Dutton, the Greeks understood that most human bodies did not conform to their ideal male body, which "depicted man, not as he actually was, but as he could or should be" (24). Yet they believed physical education to be as important as education in

literature and music. The Greek male ideal of self-mastery and control, and the "golden age" of physical dynamism, were culturally important to Hitler's belief that the Nazis represented an autonomous, powerful and undefeatable force.

Yet the same ideal of self-mastery and control, and the attendant devotion to the construction of self, profits the ideology of late capitalism, which encourages a deep belief in individualism, and a profound faith in technological innovations. However, faith in technology also serves to institutionalize the body. A recent advertisement in *Texas Monthly* magazine illustrates how the Greek predilection for youth and fitness continues to be used to encourage men to change their bodies. The advertisement is for "male enhancement surgery," or phalloplasty, and the exaggerated length of the leaf hiding the youth's genitals holds the promise of post-operative endowment (Figure 2). This body is in its prime: young, fit, autonomous. The man who desires phalloplasty, for example, has no choice but to engage the services of a professional. The body-ideal may not be something that everyone can attain, let alone afford; but as the advertisement suggests, the ideal is more easily realized through the purchase of products and services.

While focusing on Nazism in a discussion of bodybuilding might seem extreme, such a focus bears further analysis. In "Reading the Male Body," Bordo cautions that contemporary pursuits of physical perfection are leading us in a dangerous direction. She writes,

> The muscular male bodies that men and women idealize today really are starting to look more and more like those depicted in Nazi posters and sculpture, not only in their aesthetics of physical perfection, but in their unsmiling postures of ascending power and superiority. (295)

Figure 2 has been removed due to copyright legislation. The male enhancement surgery advertisement was taken from *Texas Monthly* magazine (March 1997:192).

Dutton shares Bordo's concern that Nazi notions of physical superiority and contemporary obsessions with body perfectibility are linked in some aspects of ideology and exclusion. Of Nazism, Dutton writes, never before "had the Western conception of physical development been turned to such blatantly political ends, or the idealised muscularity of classical art been so institutionalised to serve the purposes of the State" (208). If the cult of perfection was encouraged in Nazi Germany to serve the State, whose purpose might our contemporary culture's encouragement of physical perfection be serving?

I would argue that the obsessive desire to perfect the body serves capitalist consumption. As Dutton maintains, "In an age when the visible self is the leading constituent of our identity, an obsession with the self tends to become an obsession with the body" (272). By linking the perfect body to the individual's sense of self-improvement, self-confidence, and self-control, fitness-related industries prosper. Indeed, bodies are big business, and the pursuit of the perfect body turns an entire populace into mass-consuming subjects. For who doesn't want improved confidence and more self-control? These qualities are valued in contemporary society, and people *read* bodies to look for such traits. In other words, a well-built male is deemed to possess self-control and confidence because his devotion to his body *proves* that. A fit body represents a fit mind; conversely, a "flabby" body indicates a slothful and insecure individual. By marketing physical fitness as an indicator of an individual's psychic well-being, and by promising consumers that they can change their lives (their bodies) if they purchase some other service and/or product, the fitness industry prospers. It is difficult not to be affected by the emotional appeal implicit within these advertisements. None of us can live "outside" the ideology that promotes and perpetuates the cult of perfection; but we can become more critical of the discourses that call

us to change and/or regulate our bodies, and we can become more aware of the "faultlines" that draw attention to the contradictions inherent in capitalism. Indeed, a strong counter-discourse is desperately needed, one that would explore the spaces between the "before" and "after," and highlight the astronomical capital gains made by enterprises that generate a self-hatred (guised as self-love) of the body.

Bodybuilding is one of today's most lucrative sports in terms of product-sales (protein powders, work-out videos, magazines etc). Its acceptance and promotion of capitalist modes of over-consumption are unprecedented; virtually everything about it is excessive. Unlike other sports, bodybuilding employs every aspect of bodily surveillance: cosmetic surgery, adherence to strict diets, intense workouts, the use of anabolic steroids, and a rigorous performance of hyperbolic gender ideals. Every bodybuilding magazine overflows with advertisements for products ranging from vitamin supplements, hair transplants, and cosmetic surgery, to personal training, nutri-bars, active wear, and exercise videos. Joe Weider, one of the founding members (along with his brother Ben) of the International Federation of Bodybuilders (IFBB), acknowledges that bodybuilding can be expensive. In *Bodybuilding: The Weider Approach*, he details the time and money that must be invested before any returns will be made, adding that there may never *be* any returns. However, for those who do become successful professional bodybuilders, the monetary rewards are considerable. But the most significant and alarming fact is how the world of bodybuilding is a self-perpetuating circle: in order to become a professional, one must purchase the advertised products, and if one becomes successful, one makes money by marketing the very same products.

The commodification of bodies in consumer culture and the rhetoric of reformation that encourages us to pursue an ideal body type utilizes an amalgamation of social, economic, and ideological determinants that urge us to adopt a superior (i.e. fit) body type. More importantly, in this pursuit of physical perfection, a number of industries stand to profit, the diet and fitness industries chief among them. Yet in order to make bodybuilding as popular and far reaching a sport as possible, scientific discourses are also drawn upon to promote ideal body types. In "On the Muscle," Laurie Schulze asserts that "Bodybuilding is highly inflected with the discourses of science: anatomy, kinesiology, exercise physiology, sports medicine, biochemistry, and nutrition" (69). Adding scientific discourses to discussions of bodybuilding lends a seriousness and authenticity to the sport that partially removes it from the commonly-laid charge of narcissism.

The use of scientific discourses also has the effect of drawing in a number of services that would otherwise remain separate from bodybuilding. For example, in advertisements in *Muscle & Fitness*, sexual performance becomes related to nutrition, which in turn requires a product to "cure" the malady. But the product, Men's Performance, is marketed by Great American Nutrition, a division of Ben Weider Nutrition Group. The sport of bodybuilding, and by extension the proliferation of its advertisements marketed to the individual, has become the vehicle through which physical insecurities can be fostered and products can be marketed. The rhetoric surrounding the products that bodybuilding promotes, and the individual inadequacies it targets, is usually directed at two things: male machismo and male sexual performance. Bodybuilding magazines are, by and large, the male equivalent of women's magazines; within these pages, men read about how they, literally, do not "measure" up. And while some space is also devoted to creating insecurities in women

bodybuilders, the majority of the sport's magazines are overwhelmingly geared toward a male readership. Just how large is this readership? *Muscle & Fitness*, the most popular magazine, has an incredible *monthly* circulation of six million (Dutton 141).

It is worth looking at one advertisement in detail to highlight how physical insecurities are fostered in order to encourage individual consumption. The Inner Circle is a group of professionals that specializes in cosmetic surgery (Figure 3). The slogan at the top of their ad in *Muscle & Fitness* reads: "Wouldn't It Feel Good To Look Your Best" (173). This is a statement, not a question; in other words, the advertisement makes it known that "you too" can "Look Your Best." Centred on the page are a man and a woman, standing on a dais, with their backs to one another, looking outwards. They are both young, fit, and attractive. The advertisement supports the traditional gender roles of the big, strong man next to the smaller (i.e. more helpless) woman. In the margins, running alongside their bodies, are lists of cosmetic surgery options available to improve the body, from eyelid surgery to liposuction for her, and from male pattern baldness to calf enlargement for him, amongst others.

This advertisement establishes the close link between bodybuilding and cosmetic surgery. The viewer is left wondering if the well-bulked man in the advertisement has "worked" to get his physique, or if he has simply purchased it. Similarly, has the well-toned woman exercised extensively, or have her thighs been smoothed by liposuction? While the two options are not mutually exclusive, the advertisement suggests that there is an easier way to achieve physical perfection. The space between the gross body and the technologized body is blurred here as readers are left to surmise whether or not medicalized body alterations have been performed. Are the man and woman looking their best as a result of

Figure 3 has been removed due to copyright legislation. The Inner Circle advertisement was taken from *Muscle & Fitness* magazine (December 1994: 27).

technology? We are left guessing. The cleverness of the name "The Inner Circle" suggests that beauty is an inside job. However, the ad makes clear that inner peace is achieved through outside alterations; inner peace is attained by purchasing services.

In a capitalist society that bases its success on perpetuating high rates of consumption, nourishing the inner soul has also become a big business. Indeed, an entire self-help industry has sprung up to attend to the soul's well-being. Contemporary reflections upon the soul, however, differ from those of the ancient philosophers; in Platonic discourses it is through the soul, the mediator between ideas and appearances, that we obtain knowledge. Today, however, the body has become the mirror of the soul[3]--a fit body reflects a fit mind, and the proper management of desire, through dieting, working out, and practising self-restraint, reflects a well-balanced and nourished soul. In contemporary attitudes, attention to the soul has now become a market in itself; however, it remains eclipsed by the ubiquitous attention paid to the body. Contemporary knowledge is not reflected by a calm spirit, but rather by a fit body. Appeals to the notion of self-improvement channel the desire for physical perfection to the mainstream and encourage individuals to focus on their bodies. To "better yourself" or to make more money is equated with getting into shape; the intellectual has been replaced by the physical, for consumption is frenzied in the pursuit of physical perfection.

The Crisis of Masculinity

With the growing popularity of Men's Studies, a number of scholars have turned their attention to the link between the crisis of traditional male roles and changing economic structures. In *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding, Subculture and Gender Construction*, for

example, Alan M. Klein states that "traditionally, muscularity suggested some elevated level of functioning--unfortunately, usually in one of the warlike occupations. But it could also connote labor (for example, miner, blacksmith, farmer, rancher)" (5). Klein uses the word "traditionally" to signal a change from a time when "enhanced muscularity was related to the functioning body (at war, work, or worldly discovery)," to an increasingly industrialized age in which "many of the functions/occupations by which men defined themselves became obsolete" (5). In other words, he points out that the twentieth-century display of muscles differs greatly from that of the previous century. The change has occurred in the "use value" of muscularity (what muscles are "useful" for) and in the conflation of masculinity with muscularity.

Contrary to popular belief, the sport of bodybuilding does not have its origins in the blue-collar working class, "but in the white-collar middle class of nineteenth century New England" (Klein 249). From its inception, bodybuilding has fetishized the *idea* of physical labour over the actual labour itself. According to Klein, bodybuilding "fetishizes labor by creating something that appears as both a byproduct of labor and a precondition for labor: the muscled physique" (249). In the nineteenth century, depictions of muscles were more clearly aligned to a body engaged in physical labour because the industrial society was organized around the production of goods and was still largely dependent upon raw labour power. Muscles in the nineteenth century were a sign of *no* leisure from labour; in contrast, the twentieth-century muscled body signifies an abundance of leisure time spent working-out at the gym. Generally, the muscled male body in late-capitalism is detached from a working-class, labouring body.[4]

In North America, the majority of work in late capitalism has switched from jobs in the area of production, to those in the service sector. The latter area does not necessarily require an active or fit body; therefore the body's "use value," the physical muscularity that indicates its ability to labour, becomes its "exchange value," the social form of its value. By this I mean that the muscular body has a value in relation to its *appearance*, not its ability to perform physical feats; the fit body adheres to a social contract that, through the rhetoric of reformation and the visual images represented in television, magazines, and film, rewards those individuals who pursue physical perfection. As Klein argues, "It is not the ability to *do* something (skate, shoot, throw, and the like) that is demonstrated in bodybuilding, but rather only the ability to *look* like one might be able to do something" (250).

Yet in today's appearance-oriented society, the separation of muscularity and labour (form and function) often goes unrecognized because the leisure pursuit of muscles sustains a body-consciousness that perpetuates capitalism's promotion of monadic individualism. But we must also recognize that the fetishization of muscles serves to valorize the notion of employment. Put another way, while muscles are no longer directly linked to a hard-working body employed in physically demanding labour, the fetishization of muscles does support the notion of a working body--an employed body. The discourses used in bodybuilding support this statement; bodybuilders "work out," "pump iron," etc. Always the imperative, always to the limit. No pain no gain. The bodybuilder is the ideal working machine, the ideal employee.

The crisis of masculinity prevalent at the turn of the nineteenth century is once again upon us as the millennium approaches. In a fascinating article on the history of manhood in

America in the nineteenth century, "Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the Male Body, 1832-1920," Michael Kimmel argues that "Historians have long noted the turn of the century as an era of transition from a 'culture of production' to a 'culture of consumption.' Identity was based less on what one did and more upon how one lived" (20). Kimmel documents the male identity crisis of the late nineteenth century as a time when men realized that the "avenues of demonstrating manhood were suddenly closed" (19). There were virtually no arenas left in which men could physically test and prove their manhood. The move from a "culture of production" to a "culture of consumption" effectively erased the workplace as a site where men could exhibit "manly" physical traits (professional sports and the military remain two places where men's bodies exhibit the traditionally "masculine" attributes). Kimmel's arguments are useful; however, as I mentioned in the introduction, theorists are on shaky ground when they focus too much on a "culture of consumption," for production remains the base of twentieth-century capitalism. Granted, the numbers employed in production jobs have dwindled (or these jobs are being done by workers in Third World countries), but not everyone is economically privileged to consume at will.

Kimmel's study also documents that the late nineteenth century experienced a growing number of women entering the workforce. According to Klein, "as women showed that they could perform as ably as men in one traditionally privileged, male-dominated occupation after another, alarm grew in male quarters" (5). That the male body, with all its purported physicality and strength, could so easily be replaced by female workers, threatened the gendered division of labour already in place. Similarly, as an increasing number of jobs

were divorced from the need for physical strength, muscularity threatened to become redundant. As historian Elliot J. Gorn writes:

> Where would a sense of maleness come from for the worker who sat at a desk all day? How could one be manly without independence? Where was virility to be found in increasingly faceless bureaucracies? How might clerks or salesmen feel masculine doing 'women's work'? What became of rugged individualism inside intensively rationalized corporations? How could a man be a patriarch when his job kept him away from home for most of his waking hours? (192)

Although these questions were being asked at the turn of the nineteenth century, as the twenty-first century quickly approaches, they remain applicable to contemporary culture's gender crisis.

Male Bodybuilders

> Bodybuilding is a subculture of hyperbole. In its headlong rush to accrue flesh, everything about this subculture exploits grandiosity. Not only are the bodies in this world large, but even descriptions of them are extravagant. (3)
>
> Alan M. Klein

The contemporary increase in popularity of professional male bodybuilding occurs in conjunction with new economic trends towards globalization and the displacement of workers by machines. Unlike the crisis of masculinity in the nineteenth century that largely stemmed from an increase in non-physical and sedentary employment for men, divorced from the need for physical strength, the crisis of masculinity in late capitalism arises from the growing realization that the requirement for large scale human labour in North America

is becoming obsolete. Economic pundits and social theorists alike increasingly acknowledge that a complete restructuring of work under globalization is in order. Theorists such as Stanley Aronowitz and William DiFazio, in *The Jobless Future: Sci-Tech and the Dogma of Work*; Jeremy Rifkin, in *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*; and Juliet B. Schor, in *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, recognize the dire need for reimagining the traditional forty-hour work week, and workers' hitherto unquestioned "right" to overtime. These theorists are responding to employment trends of the last decade that illustrate massive job-loss due to lay-offs, and a steadily high rate of unemployment.

Kimmel's work on nineteenth-century masculinity suggests a direct correlation between unsatisfactory employment prospects, and increased attention paid to the body. Indeed, he highlights the turn of the 19th century as a point when attention to physical fitness reached a peak. Similarly, a rise in physical culture movements and in bodybuilding as it related to nation-building gained popularity at the turn of the 20th century. As Mark Seltzer argues in *Bodies and Machines*, the rise of the boy scout movement in the early 1900s was largely a response to the rather degenerate physical health of American boys. The linking of nation-building with bodybuilding suggested that vigorous manliness was equated with national security (149-150).

Currently, we are witnessing a similar obsession with body maintenance that suggests anxieties about conventional gender roles are still with us. However, in addition to the traditional reading of gender anxiety, I want to argue that the organized focus on the body's "health," directed primarily by the diet and fitness industries, but also by employers and insurance agencies (I discuss this further in the next chapter), far from being about

physical well-being, is a market-driven ploy to stimulate new areas of consumption in the glutted North American market.[5] Moreover, the labour involved in restructuring the human body, and the grand-scale paralleling of deficit rhetoric with the rhetoric of diet and fitness industries ("lean and mean," "trimming to the bone," etc.) simultaneously masks and foreshadows the growing depletion of labour opportunities available in the new global economics. Thus unemployed workers "go to work" on their bodies, they "work out," they show self-confidence and "just do it." They become, in other words, entrepreneurs by investing in a self-employment that consists of complete somatic absorption.

Samuel Fussell's autobiography, *Muscle: Confessions of an Unlikely Bodybuilder,* demonstrates the degree to which this somatic absorption can lead to destruction. The shocking photographs of Fussell "before" and "after" he takes up bodybuilding provide an astounding document of a male pursuit of masculinity. Moreover, *Muscle* offers an intriguing analysis of how masculinity is as much a construct and/or performance as femininity.

Feminist theory has been invaluable in its theorization of femininity and the "masquerade" of genders. In *Gender Trouble*, for example, Judith Butler makes clear that "gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way" (6). It is not a logical sequence, she argues, to assume that masculinity will always fix itself to a male body; there is nothing to stop femininity from inhabiting a biologically male body or masculinity from fixing itself to a biologically female body (6). Her work extends the pivotal studies done on "masquerade" by Joan Rivière. In "Womanliness as a Masquerade," Rivière states that "women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men" (35). But it is not just women who suffer from this masquerade; men are also victimized by the expectations of traditional gender roles. *Muscle*

illustrates that masculinity is also a masquerade, and provides a male version of this pursuit of traditional gender roles by detailing men's obsessive pursuit of masculinity. As Rivière's work quite accurately points out, women suffer for appearing too masculine, and men suffer for appearing too feminine; hence her statement that "homosexual men exaggerate their heterosexuality as a 'defence' against their homosexuality" (35). However, in the case of bodybuilding, heterosexual men often exaggerate their masculinity as a defence against traditionally "feminine" emotions.

Referred to as "undoubtedly the best account of the world of serious bodybuilding" (Simpson 29), *Muscle* details one man's obsessive pursuit of masculinity. Standing 6'4" and weighing a gaunt 170 pounds, Fussell moves to New York and experiences an all-consuming terror of street-crimes and the frequency of everyday dangers. Feeling that he is not "man" enough because of this fear, he stumbles across a solution to his problem in a book store. There on the shelf stood *Arnold: The Education of a Bodybuilder*, by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Like Charles Atlas's skinny rake who has sand kicked in his face and vows never to let it happen again, Fussell is drawn to Arnold's autobiography by the same desperate desire to make himself invincible. "I knew it in an instant," he writes, "my prayers were answered. What if I made myself into a walking billboard of invulnerability like Arnold?" (24). Thus his goal is set: to become invincible. "I wanted to get as big as possible as fast as possible. The bigger, the better--that boded best for personal protection" (29). But what starts as a bid to achieve "personal protection" turns into a cycle of addiction and physical torture.

Fussell's response to Schwarzenegger's book demonstrates the cultural mythology that surrounds the hyperbolic masculinity exhibited by bodybuilders who symbolize the

"male fantasy of sexual potency and physical intimidation" (Spring 20). A number of television shows and films, since the late 1970s in particular, have glorified and idealized the heightened muscularity of men--from Sylvester Stallone's pugilist-hero, Rocky Balboa, in the *Rocky* series; to bodybuilders such as Schwarzenegger, in *Conan the Barbarian* and *The Terminator* films, *Commando*, *Predator*, and *Total Recall*; to Lou Ferrigno in *The Incredible Hulk*; and Stallone in the *Rambo* films, to name a few. In all of these instances, the myth of the superhero/bodybuilder (read Americans) is upheld by depictions of his invincible strength and unquestioned power to rule; he acts as the defender of individualism (democracy) against the systems of totalitarianism and communism. Therefore, it is not surprising that Fussell believes he has found salvation when he discovers Schwarzenegger's autobiography, complete with photographs of his steroid-enhanced body.

Schwarzenegger (five-times Mr. Universe and an unprecedented seven times Mr. Olympia), is not only a convincing marketing pin-up and spokesman for bodybuilding, he also epitomizes the American myth of the self-made man--the man who rises above restrictive class-boundaries. As a young, Austrian emigrant to the United States, he worked hard and made his fortune. Self-employed, he literally used his time to invest in himself, in his body. But how does the bodybuilder's obsessive focus on monadic individualism contribute to late capitalism's promotion of free enterprise? What about the extensive training sessions and daily commitments to hours spent in the gym? To what extent is this unpaid labour?

When Fussell begins his bodybuilding career, he works for a New York publishing house. But as his obsession to train takes up more and more of his time, he quits his paid employment and moves into a tiny basement suite to commit himself entirely to his new

fitness regime. He eats an inordinate amount of food, and supplements his "diet" with 108 BIG Chewables a day (tablets designed to lower the body's metabolism and increase bulk). Literally force-feeding himself, Fussell is often found "lunging for a streetlamp out on the street or lurching for the men's room...to rid [his] guts of the wretched surplus" (64). He is not alone in this act. Hand in hand with the "disease"--"a complete commitment to all matters pertaining to iron" (9)--are various forms of physical deprivation and self-torture that include vomiting, fasting, force-feeding, and injecting steroids.

Soon, Fussell's entire existence revolves around his quest for somatic expansion. He labels his days according to which body part needs focus ("leg day," "chest day," "back day," etc.), and he sleeps between his twice-daily workouts. Although he is "working hard," his time is not remunerated (and his inheritance money dwindles). Indeed, as a double insult, his labour is something he pays to do: he pays for his gym membership, his BIG Chewables, his bodybuilding magazines, his inflated grocery bill, and, eventually, for his steroids and competition fees. This unpaid labour exposes how Fussell's time is spent without being monetarily compensated. He spends time and invests in himself, but this expenditure is drawn directly from his personal savings. In effect, the bodybuilding industry (the entire interwoven machine) exploits Fussell by encouraging his addiction, and then it extracts profit from his unpaid labour. When not in the gym, he becomes a walking advertisement for bodybuilding. Only after he devotes over two years to the sport does his investment begin to pay off. He moves to the bodybuilding mecca of Southern California, and finds employment in a gym as a personal trainer.

Surprisingly, given the time and money professional bodybuilders spend on sculpting their bodies, employment opportunities for serious bodybuilders are somewhat limited. As

Loïc J.D. Wacquant argues in his review article "Why Men Desire Muscles," bodybuilders' "income-generating activities are contained within, or derivative of, the cosmos of bodybuilding" (167). Fussell works as a personal trainer to make money, and occasionally poses for calendars; Vinnie, a gym regular, earns money by selling illegal steroids; Bamm Bamm moonlights as a loan shark; and Nimrod trains older women one-on-one and earns extra money by selling sexual services. Other employment possibilities exist in the pornography market, which offers bodybuilders the opportunity to be photographed and/or filmed engaged in sexual acts. Such work is typical of the four "B's" of jobs available to bodybuilders: "bill collecting, bouncing, body guarding, and beefcake (jumping out of cakes nude, or posing nude or semi-nude)" (Klein 94). All of these means of employment exploit the illusion that muscles translate into a hyper-masculinity.

Unlike the diet industry, then, which boasts that you can never be too thin (although becoming exceedingly emaciated does limit employment opportunities), having too many muscles can be a deterrent to finding more traditional employment. Whereas thinness enjoys a cultural dominance in late capitalism, and individuals know that economic rewards accompany efforts to attain a thin beauty ideal, bodybuilding still exists on the margins of hegemonic representations of beauty. But as *Muscle* illustrates, when a bodybuilder catches "the disease," he has no desire to work outside of the parameters that the world of bodybuilding sets. For bodybuilding, despite its relative obscurity as a sport, and its cultural marginalization, has become a big business. "The IFBB now boasts 134 affiliated national bodybuilding associations," and winning international competitions includes handsome income potential from endorsement contracts (Dutton 147). Sales of associated products--"weights and training machines, workout clothing and diet supplements"--constitute "an

annual billion-dollar earner in the US alone, and to this can be added the multi-million dollar monthly sales of specialised magazines and (more recently) videos" (Dutton 147). Indeed, Dutton estimates that "34.9 million Americans currently practise some form of bodybuilding with weight equipment" (147). And while the majority of this number use weights to gain some margin of muscle definition, many embrace the bodybuilding culture and end up seeking the success represented by figures such as Schwarzenegger. In any event, the growing interest in the sport proves that the margin is infiltrating the mainstream.

But *Muscle* is not a complete glorification of bodybuilding. In fact, Fussell ultimately decides to leave the sport altogether because of the "iron casualties" he sees all around him--"cleft palates, speech impediments, club feet, PWC's (People with Causes: militant vegetarians, animal rights activists, Christers). [The gym]...was a breeding ground for the inept, the inane, and, when it came down to it, the homeless" (153-154). Slowly, he begins to see himself in this category as well. Yet in addition to the above, "iron casualties" also begin to include those who become obsessed at great physical expense. For example, Vinnie, a fellow lifter, is famous for pursuing the "big lifts." Fussell observes him in action and notes,

> Looking down, I saw beneath his weight-lifting belt what appeared to be a white plastic retaining liner partially hidden beneath the fabric of his genie pants. It didn't click then, but it should have. The hulk was wearing Huggies, the superabsorbent diaper built to contain any accident, no matter how extreme.... Thus equipped, he could concentrate solely on the lift at hand. No embarrassment, no failure. His record was a full box for one session--one record I didn't want to break. (100)

Thus, a big hulk of a man who lifts weights for further strength and invincibility is reduced to a baby's status by wearing diapers. The irony is blatant. The overly inflated musculature connotes one idea, while the sickly side-effects of serious lifting connote another. Such destructive behavior certainly warrants entrance into the "iron casualty" category.

Muscle powerfully chronicles the discourse of desperation that promotes a number of bodybuilding's destructive behaviours. The rampant use of steroids, for example, has side-effects that include diarrhea, "roid rage," headaches, rectal bleeding, acne, impotence, and hair loss. Thus, the purported strength that is the visual image presented by the bodybuilders masks a greater weakness. And while the physical pain and constant abuse of the body is one thing, the psychical pain is another. Bodybuilders are often referred to as "reverse anorexics" (Simpson 34) who are never satisfied that they are big enough. Symptoms of Fussell's psychic anguish are everywhere in the narrative. One example is the manner in which he chronically analyzes his body, obsessively taking a mental inventory:

> Every few hours, no matter where I was, I found myself running through my muscle inventory, checking to make sure I was still there. From head to toe, I'd squeeze and flex every body part: traps? check; deltoids? check; pecs? check; lat wings? check; bi's and tri's? check; quads? check; calves? check. All present and accounted for. (82)

The extreme self-centredness of this obsessive ritual of self-study is symptomatic of a fierce individualism focused upon the desire to have *control* over oneself, which "is a central cultural theme in bodybuilding" (Klein 176). But Fussell's autobiography illustrates that what begins as control soon spirals into its opposite--obsession and addiction.

The disciplinary practices that code Fussell's body as masculine are strikingly similar to those that code women's bodies as feminine. Compare the above passage with Sandra Lee Bartky's description of a self-policing female subject:

> The woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate of Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance. (80)

Interesting in this comparison between a woman's self-inventory and Fussell's is the way Bartky goes on to state that "This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy" (80). The woman, in presenting her "feminine" self, fits into and supports the prevailing ideals of femininity. Similarly, Fussell's desire to become more "manly" maintains the rigid gender ideologies enforced within patriarchy. The self-surveillance of both extremes, the woman who is not "feminine" enough and the man who is not "masculine" enough, serves patriarchy, for both subjects strive to fill a recognizable place within the disciplining system. As Grosz argues, "All of us, men as much as women, are caught up in modes of self-production and self-observation" (144). Grosz takes issue with Bartky's assertion that self-surveillance signals an acceptance of patriarchal paradigms; she prefers to argue that the "various networks of power...never... render us merely passive and compliant" (144). In Grosz's conception of self-surveillance, there remains the possibility of "guerrilla subversion of patriarchal codes" (144). While this may be true in some instances, Fussell readily admits that in his case, subservience, not subversion, occurs.

Fussell completely buys into the discourses of bodybuilding that promise invincibility and confidence. However, he later discovers that the discourses of health, machismo, and self-improvement proliferated in bodybuilding circles mask an underlying pathology. As Klein argues, "The competitive bodybuilder's lifestyle...sandwiches anorexic and bulimic behavior between competition, all the while calling it health" (154). The voluminous vomiting, gorging, and fasting in *Muscle*, as well as the pathetic figure of Vinnie in diapers, certainly support Klein's argument. Like Klein, Simpson also works to undo the mythology of male bodybuilders. What is "conveniently forgotten in the deployment of the bodybuilder as superhero," he argues, is that "serious bodybuilding and drug abuse go hand in hand" (28). In other words, the marketing rhetoric that depicts bodybuilding as a healthy lifestyle values appearance over true physical fitness.

> Presenting itself as a picture of health, clean living, personal cultivation and conservatism--a modern religion for kids--it contains within itself the potential to topple over into its opposite: madness, sleaze, self-abuse and criminality. Like masculinity, it advertises a superficial strength which turns out not to bear close examination. (Simpson 28)

Put another way, bodybuilding, with its representational links to good eating and healthy living, is a lie.

Yet *Muscle* remains a valuable document of the male pursuit of traditional gender ideals. Its exploration of the subculture of bodybuilding illustrates the male fantasy of sexual potency and physical intimidation that bodybuilding signifies. During one competition, a fellow lifter tells Fussell, "You looked like a human fucking penis! Veins were poppin' every which way!" (232). (It comes as no surprise that Fussell chooses Isaac Hayes's "Theme from

Shaft" as his musical accompaniment.) Although the male body in competition form is obviously not "a human...penis," Simpson argues that

> The implied phallic substitution is spot on. The body is 'pumped up', 'rock hard' and 'tight'; the fashion for 'vascularity' calls for minimal skin fat ... so that the road map of veins is clearly visible, standing out from the flesh in a fashion alarmingly reminiscent of an erect penis. (33)

The male bodybuilder dramatizes the insecurity and fluidity of gender categories. He embodies not so much the "natural" and inherent characteristics of "phallic power" and virility, "but rather...the sacred mystery of sex and gender, the fluidity of the categories male and female, masculine and feminine, hetero and homo and the fabulous, perverse tricks they play" (Simpson 42). When we look to female bodybuilders, the "perverse tricks" of gender bending become more obvious.

Fussell describes one female bodybuilder as follows:

> Her body was covered with muscles, her face with makeup, which was running from her sweat. In a voice deeper than Paul Robeson's, she shouted "Fuckin'A!" at every bicep rep. What appeared to be the beginning of a beard descended like Spanish moss from her upper lip down to her chin. Her back brought to mind a mohair sweater. She wasn't quite a woman and she wasn't quite a man, but she was, unmistakably, a builder. (90)

Unlike the women, male bodybuilders more easily escape the sexual limbo that marks the female bodybuilder (not quite a woman and not quite a man). Even though Fussell and his bodybuilding peers engage in various beautifying techniques traditionally associated with feminine pursuits--such as shaving their bodies, dyeing their hair, and wearing hair

extensions--their muscles still enable them to comfortably occupy the male category. At the same time, however, it is precisely because male bodybuilders engage in "feminizing" activities that their sexuality has been deemed suspect.

In *The Perfectible Body*, Dutton attributes to Schwarzenneger the changing stereotype that links homosexuality with bodybuilding. "Women could desire him, but men could also watch him with admiration or envy, free from any overtones of sexual deviance. His own exclusively, almost aggressively, heterosexual orientation was as carefully promoted an aspect of his persona as was his physique itself" (145). Thus, in the early 1970s, instead of the sole focus on the developed body, bodybuilders were photographed with their wives and girlfriends. In the film *Pumping Iron* (1974), Schwarzenneger was shown "on the beach, surrounded by bikini-clad maidens or carrying a bare-breasted young woman on his shoulders" (Dutton 145). The association of homosexuality with bodybuilding was, for a time, dismantled. Yet in trying to maintain a definite gender category, the threat of homosexuality remains the biggest difficulty that male bodybuilders confront; this, more than anything, threatens their status as "men,"[6] for muscularity and masculinity are compatible only when they are defined within a heterosexual matrix.

> Fussell concludes *Muscle* with a retrospective look at his four-year career:
>
> I became a bodybuilder as a means of caricature. The inflated cartoon I became relieved me from the responsibility of being human. But once I'd become that caricature, that inflated cartoon, I longed for something else. As painful and humiliating as it is to be human, being subhuman or superhuman is far worse. (249)

Only *after* he has pursued this lifestyle does he recognize that "iron casualties" encompasses a large group. The autobiographical descriptions of his four obsessive years of bodybuilding are meant to demystify--indeed, d*emyth*ify--the bizarre subculture of bodybuilding. The physical and psychical pain involved with seeking corporeal perfection, and the painful transformation that occurs between the "before" and "after" are well documented here. Not everyone, however, reads Fussell's autobiography with such a generous gratitude for unmasking the lie. Justin Spring, for example, in his review "Head to Toe," writes:

> In the end, *Muscle* isn't a sexy book, it's an embarrassing one--embarrassing because the psychic self-laceration of this bodybuilder/ autobiographer seems...so questionably motivated: 'I had at last achieved the metamorphosis. What my father called 'an atavistic nightmare,' what Clive James called 'a condom filled with walnuts,' what my mother called 'a cautionary conceit," I had become. A bodybuilder at last.' One wonders at a man who enjoys writing such things about himself. So much self-mockery suggests a (tortured) self-love. A book about oneself, after all. Such a clever one. And those bikini-bottomed photos in the photo-insert. (20)

Spring is right to be suspicious of Fussell's narrative. At the same time that *Muscle* exposes the seamy-side of bodybuilding, it also reads as a how-to guide for prospective newcomers. Indeed, even the subtitle, *Confessions of an Unlikely Bodybuilder*, potentially attracts the very same target group that he once occupied--the young and scrawny male.

Ultimately, however, what separates Fussell from the other iron casualties is his intelligence; for at the same time that he acknowledges his addiction to bodybuilding's world that includes all-consuming workouts, steroid cycles, bingeing and dieting, he still manages

to nourish a kernel of doubt. He writes: "No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't eradicate my skepticism" (133). And this doubt, or perhaps superiority, sets him apart. Of Joe Weider, the "father" of bodybuilding, he writes:

> Unlike my friends, I had different sources, the daily newspapers and weekly newsmagazines, and I knew that this same Joe had recently shelled out $400,000 to the Federal Trade Commission for an out-of-court settlement involving his 'Anabolic Mega-Pak' and his 'Dynamic Life Essence' pills. (134)

And later in the narrative, Fussell suddenly tells us that he has been keeping a journal right up until his big competition: "The entries from my journal of that week testify to the severity of my condition. As the days progressed, my handwriting transformed itself from neat, orderly precision to a wild, incomprehensible scrawl" (217). Even though he states that bodybuilding "was an existence so stylized it left room for little else" (131), Fussell still manages to find time to read newspapers and magazines (sources not related to bodybuilding), and to chronicle his physical deterioration before a competition. His professions of interest in the outside world are entirely incongruent with the detailed descriptions of his near death-bed status while crash-dieting before a competition.

Witness the following passage, for example, that describes Fussell's attempt to attain the coveted "shrink-wrap" look:

> By Wednesday, the decrease of carbohydrates left me so little energy that I stopped training altogether. No longer was the gym the focus of my life. Now it was the sofa. After I rose each morning, I lingered over my breakfast, then weaved my way to the sofa, where I spent the remainder of the day,

> hallucinating and sleeping....Even standing was excruciatingly painful. The soles of my feet, without their padding of fat, couldn't take my body weight. (216)

Can we believe Fussell when, just a few paragraphs later, he tells us he is keeping a journal? In the end, the Oxford graduate is simply too smart for this world. The last sentence of the autobiography illustrates this authorial arrogance: "I had to leave," he writes. "I was a lone and solitary skeptic in this realm of smiling and pumped Pollyannas" (252). He has seen the light, and how good it makes him look.

Professional male bodybuilders are the forerunners of a new masculinity that is increasingly becoming normalized. The contemporary "resurgence" of bodybuilding takes a very different form from the Greek's predilection for physical perfection, and from the great feats of strength exhibited by the strong-men of the late nineteenth century. In both cases, strength and fitness were in some way married to the physical acts performed by the body at work. Whether the body displayed its advantages in sporting events, or in otherwise seemingly impossible feats, there was no separation between the body's form and its function. But as Klein notes, in the contemporary world of bodybuilding, professional bodybuilders are caricatured images of manhood--their muscle-bound physiques are not glorified in any sport-related acts of strength or agility. Instead, the use value of their muscles comes solely from being judged during competitions, where they are visibly displayed for public consumption.

What we are witnessing with the current resurgence of bodybuilding is both a re-affirmation and a redefinition of masculinity. In "Masculinity on Stage," Randall et al argue that bodybuilding

> offers men clear-cut mechanisms for asserting values traditionally associated with masculinity. The physique capable of winning contests is *hypermasculine*, and achieving it requires a lifestyle centered on control and conducive to individualism, independence, domination, and competition. (63)

Strength and the ability to take charge are retained in a hyperbolic fashion in the bodybuilder. However, coupled with this exaggerated representation of strength is the fact that bodybuilders do not use their muscles for anything other than to flex them before crowds in competition. Hence, one could argue that one redefinition of masculinity involves the male's refusal to engage in physical altercations.

Bodybuilding provides a forum in which men can look strong without having to actually *employ* their muscles. Unlike contemporary boxers who, as Wacquant argues in "Pugs at Work: Bodily Capital and Bodily Labour Among Professional Boxers," practice similar disciplinary behaviours, bodybuilders are never called upon to test their strength in the same way that boxers are called to enter the ring. For example, both Fussell and Fernand, a character in Jean-Claude Lauzon's film *Léolo* (1993), become bodybuilders in order to *appear* tough. But neither of them is actually capable of fabricating a fighting attitude that matches the "tough" stance of his body.

In *Muscle*, Fussell makes clear that masculinity involves a performance in which displays of masculine strength and courage are rarely called upon to be performed. Klein

suggests that this separation from having to use force is one of bodybuilding's primary attractions. "As a bodybuilder," he argues, "a man can mediate between the desire to be gentle and an avoidance of the charge of cowardice" (275). By gaining the *appearance* of strength and courage, Fussell realizes he "could remain a coward and no one would ever know!" (25).

A similar response to the desire to be muscular and therefore invincible occurs in *Léolo*. The film tells the story of a young protagonist, Leo, who grapples with class restrictions, childhood cruelty, family madness, and his own burgeoning sexuality. Within this grand narrative is the story of Leo's idolization of his older brother, Fernand. One day, when the two brothers are delivering newspapers to a factory, the adolescent Fernand is beat up by a local bully. Humiliated by his defeat, Fernand returns home and embarks on a muscle training program. Again, like the young man who has sand kicked into his face and turns to Charles Atlas for help, Fernand begins to lift weights and to read muscle magazines. He constructs home-made barbells from old paint cans filled with cement, and from that day forward engages constantly in some form of bodily improvement; in every frame, he can be seen doing sit-ups, push ups, and/or pull ups. When he sits at the kitchen table, a blender is always at his right elbow, into which he adds protein powders and other bulk encouraging ingredients. Like Fussell, Fernand believes that his size and muscles will deter anyone from fighting with him again.

Later, however, when Fernand has achieved an incredible metamorphosis into a muscle-bound hulk, Leo and his brother again run into the bully who humiliated Fernand. Leo mouths off to the bully because he believes the bulked-up Fernand is now capable of defeating anyone. Fernand takes off his jacket and flexes his large muscles. The scrawny

bully comments that Ben Weider must have been good to him, and then he flexes his own underdeveloped muscles before punching Fernand in the face. Despite his newly acquired bulk, Fernand remains incapable of fighting back and allows the bully to hit him repeatedly. In the end, Fernand lies on the ground in the foetal position, with his hands over his face, while the bully kicks him and lords over him once again. The scene concludes with Leo putting his arms around Fernand who is crying in a heap on the ground.

This poignant and somewhat pathetic moment illustrates that muscle is virtually useless without a psychological attitude to match it. Fernand's muscles might be intimidating, but his pacifist personality undermines his muscular physique. Crouching over the weeping body of his brother, Leo rightly thinks: "That fear still lived. A mountain of muscles could not change a thing." "Two hundred pounds of muscle," Fernand is "a beautiful little baby got too big." In Fernand's case, a muscular display does nothing. The before and after pictures are similar: both times he gets sand kicked into his face.

Léolo dramatizes the conflict between the external show of male power and the internal attitudes towards conventional masculinity. By working out and formally acknowledging his choice to enter into the realm of male power, Fernand hopes that he will never again be threatened with male violence. By creating a seemingly invincible body, Fernand, like Fussell, believes he will be excluded from having to prove his masculinity. Not surprisingly, both Fussell and Fernand have "bought into" the belief that increased muscles are synonymous with increased intimidation. The literature that encourages young bodybuilders is predicated on this myth of intimidation and bullying strength.

The Women

> ...when women enter the arena of bodybuilding, a twofold challenge to the natural order is posed. Not only is the naturalness of the body called into question by its inscription within a certain kind of performance: but when women have the muscles, the natural order of gender is under threat as well. (17)
>
> Annette Kuhn

Female bodybuilders trouble the essentially neat theories often applied to their male counterparts. Unlike male bodybuilders, who can be said to be in pursuit of a hyper-masculinity they no longer receive from their employment or from other areas in their lives, female bodybuilders challenge hegemonic representations of women and refute traditional claims to femininity which always represent women as a mirror complement to male identity. If, as many critics suggest, men turn to bodybuilding because they are grappling with "the ancient image of maleness" (Randall 66; Kimmel), then it should come as no surprise that women are turning to bodybuilding to grapple with ancient images of femaleness. Just as men no longer have the role of "hunter, builder, hewer of wood, and drawer of water" (Randall 66), women are no longer solely bound to the domestic sphere.

In challenging traditional gender roles and threatening the inscriptions that ensure stereotypical femininity, women bodybuilders face a different political economy than male bodybuilders. Certainly, there is nothing "natural" about the modes of female body inscriptions that we have become used to, such as make-up, stilettos, hair sprays, etc, goods that seek to change the biological structures of individual women (making them appear to have higher cheekbones, greater stature, thicker hair etc.). Indeed, as Elizabeth Grosz argues in *Volatile Bodies*,

> There is no 'natural' norm; there are only cultural forms of body, which do or do not conform to social norms. The problem is not the conformity to cultural patterns, models, or even stereotypes, but which particular ones are used and with what effects. (143)

In other words, the "femininity" that has come to appear "normal" to contemporary society is culturally fabricated. The female bodybuilder, however, troubles this "normal" script of femininity.

Most theorists tend to analyze bodybuilding from a materialist perspective that takes into account capitalist modes of high consumption. Anne Bolin, for example, In "Vandalized Vanity: Feminine Physiques Betrayed and Portrayed," "documents the power of culture to contour, inscribe, embellish, and mortify the female form" (79). Similarly, in "On the Muscle," Laurie Schulze illustrates how women's bodybuilding is domesticated and packaged for female readers so that the "threat" to traditional systems of sexual difference is neutralized. Both Bolin and Schulze examine bodybuilding from the perspective of big business and from an analysis of how business promoters package the muscled woman. But all theorists of female bodybuilding ask the same question: how far can a female bodybuilder go and still be considered a woman?

What intrigues Schulze most about this question is not necessarily how far the women bodybuilders can go, but rather what recuperative strategies advertising and promotions undergo in order to make the transformation seem natural. According to Schulze, "If the figure of the female bodybuilder is controversial, disturbing, and transgresses established notions of what a woman is 'supposed to look like,' she is also capable of being positioned in a more normative regime" (60). National exposure of female bodybuilders in

magazines often has them labelled according to the "accepted maps of femininity" (Schulze 60); they are described in relation to sexuality, sex appeal, and desirability; they are also described as heterosexual. As long as these traditionally feminine characteristics are met, then bodybuilding does not subvert hegemonic gender roles.

Advertising has channelled women's bodybuilding into the mainstream by focusing on normative ideals of beauty that invoke notions of "self-improvement, self-confidence, and self-control" (Schulze 63), while at the same time linking it to a "regime of hedonism and self-maintenance" (Schulze 65). By positioning the female bodybuilder within the popular discourses of body maintenance, advertising associates her "with the ideas of hard work, self-discipline, competition, and success" (Schulze 65), all of which are privileged (i.e. "male") characteristics of a "healthy" capitalist subject. Schulze argues that although popular discourse attempts to link the female bodybuilder to all that is deemed valuable in a consumer culture, the female bodybuilder "continues to cause considerable ideological strain" (65). Unlike the situation in other sports, this "strain" is not easily reconciled with traditional gender roles and the biological determinism that is at the root of inequality between the sexes.

Hence, it is useful to situate the rise of female bodybuilding in relation to female emancipation. If men at the end of the nineteenth century were undergoing a crisis in masculinity partially brought on by women's increased visibility in the public sphere, did women also take this opportunity to "flex" their muscles, so to speak? In the early part of this century, many women, responding in part to the new trend of fashion toward a slim figure, enrolled in Mensendieck courses. Developed by a Swedish physician, the treatment program was a system of physical culture based on gymnastics and on certain weight-reducing

devices. Dr. Mensendieck opened many salons throughout Europe (mostly in Scandinavia and Germany) and in California. Due to the massive popularity of the Mensendieck System, the need to train "teachers" brought about the appearance of special institutes where certificates were issued to insure the proper application of the system's principles.

In spite of various physical culture movements in history, however, the highly-muscled female body has no historical precedent. Both Schulze and Bolin locate the female bodybuilder as a 1980s phenomenon. But it is important to understand why women came to bodybuilding at this time. According to Bolin, "until recently the athletic ideal was the antithesis of the feminine beauty ideal. The athletic body gained momentum as a result of the dovetailing of two movements: that of feminism in the 1960s and the fitness movement of the 1980s" (89). Hence, the merging of two sociohistorical movements, feminism and fitness, created the opportunity for women to enter the gyms. I would agree with Bolin's above generalization if she had limited her discussion to bodybuilding alone. However, by referring simply to an "athletic ideal," she overlooks the early popularity of the Gibson girl, who, between "1895 and World War I...came to dominate standards of beauty in women" (Banner 154). The Gibson girl was the prototype of the "new woman," who engaged in sports, and who "seemed to validate the aims of the advocates of exercise and athletics" (Banner 156).

There are many examples of early athleticism and attention to physical culture, as the Gibson girl and the Mensendieck system illustrate. Bolin's attempt, then, to posit an athletic female ideal *as the result of* two social movements--feminism and the fitness movement--ignores more historical examples of market forces that directed attention to the body. Yet she is right to recognize that female bodybuilding marks a departure from more traditional

efforts to code the female body. Women's competitive bodybuilding dates from the late 1970s, when women began to push for inclusion in the sport. "Prior to this time, the only contests available to women were little more than 'bathing beauty' contests" (Mansfield and McGinn 54-55). Whether such emphasis on the potential for female muscularity can be read as emancipatory, or as yet another backlash, remains to be seen. Are female bodybuilders devoted to pushing the limits of the female body, or are they striving to attain a body that mirrors the ideal of beauty, a body that is male? In other words, is female bodybuilding about transgressing or blurring the lines between the sexes, or is it simply a new attempt to discipline the female body? By presenting a "new" and equally difficult body ideal to attain, does bodybuilding further restrict the female body?

The film, *Pumping Iron II--The Women* (1985), clearly outlines the dilemma that women bodybuilders face. They are immediately confronted with the decision whether to train to obtain a physique like the "feminine" centrefold (the Rachel McLish variety), or like the masculine woman (the Bev Francis variety): either the sex symbol or the as-yet-unnameable female man. Indeed, the primary theme of the film revolves around deciding what kind of female body is acceptable, and demonstrating how the body can be shaped and sculpted.

Annette Kuhn's article on this film, "The Body and Cinema: Some Problems for Feminism," maintains that female bodybuilders are challenging traditional ideals of how muscled a woman's body can be while still being considered womanly. Kuhn suggests that part of the pleasure for the viewing audience lies in the fact that the female body is seen to be an object that women can sculpt and define at their will (16). But it must be recognized that this "pleasure" in viewing a self-created body, this visual discourse of reformation, can also

be read as a further enslavement of women to power relations that invariably favour men. Simply put, when compared to male bodybuilders, women's bodies will *always* be second-rate. Even though female bodybuilding may represent a powerful new relationship between women and their bodies, it still falls under the constant imperative for women to somehow change their bodies. The enormous amount of hard work over a long period needed to produce the sculpted body cannot be ignored. The valorization of control and self-will that such a transformation entails erases the pain of the individual who attempts to sculpt her own body, and obscures the unpaid labour involved in the transformation process (such as the hours working out in the gym, the money for gym membership, and the various paraphernalia that accompanies serious weight-training). As Bordo makes clear, the beauty "ideals which beckon women with a promise of power, invulnerability, and control, ultimately tyrannize them with their impossible standards of physical perfection, youth, slenderness" ("Reading" 306). Either representation, whether of the slender woman or the muscular woman, is marketed as if it were easily obtained. Targeting the body as the site where personal fulfilment can be achieved serves only to further the obsession with the body and the varying ways in which it can be perfected.

But at the same time that *Pumping Iron II* agonizes over the "limits of the female body" (Kuhn 17), the film also raises the question of how bodies function as signifiers of sexual difference. "What is a woman's body?" Kuhn asks. "Is there a point at which a woman's body becomes something else? What is the relationship between a certain type of body and 'femininity'?" (16). In the end, Kuhn does not answer these questions, nor does she offer a resolution to the problematic relationship of women and bodybuilding. Rather, her work questions whether women can take pleasure in visual representations, or whether there

can be some enjoyment in the "pleasure of resistance" (22). So whereas Kuhn avoids directly addressing whether female bodybuilding is an emancipatory activity, she provides productive insights into how the body operates as a signifier of sexual difference (based on biological sex, social gender etc.) and the various ways in which this body can be read. Kuhn does, however, write that *Pumping Iron II*, despite its many contradictions, "can be read if not as actually unravelling this discursive formation [of sexual difference], certainly as unpicking it a little around the edges" (16-17).

Schulze, on the other hand, believes female bodybuilding has the potential of a much greater emancipatory element. "Female bodybuilding," she argues, "is a direct, threatening resistance to patriarchy at its most biologist foundations" (71). As such, it challenges patriarchy at the root of its arguments for male supremacy: the belief that the male body is "naturally" endowed with more physical strength than the female body. For nowhere is the female body less stereotypically female (i.e. soft, jiggling, etc.) than in the female bodybuilder. Yet we cannot overlook the contradictions posed by this sport. For example, while women have indeed reached goals in a variety of employment areas, Bolin notes that "these gains are mediated by the culture of beauty and the potency of femininity" (90). Female bodybuilders may pose a challenge to patriarchy, but they do so dressed in bikinis, with full makeup, painted nails, and "feminine" hairstyles. As a result, any radical "unravelling" of sexual difference takes place within a traditional format of femininity.

In fact, "beauty is a very important part of marketing the sport and hence is closely tied to the criteria for the selection of contest winners" (Bolin 90-91). Cory Everson, six times Ms. Olympia, "has adopted the blonde, 'Barbie doll' look of the hyper-feminine" and her stage performance emphasises "dance, grace and creativity" (Mansfield and McGinn 63).

With these stereotypical feminine trappings, it comes as no surprise that women's bodybuilding competitions are riddled with controversy. A woman bodybuilder, unlike her male counterpart, can actually be marked lower for having *too much* muscle. Steroid abuse is cited as the number one reason for excess growth in both male and female bodybuilders; yet, significantly, "drug-testing for women was initiated in 1985 in efforts to provide a more acceptable image for the public at large. This was approximately five years prior to testing the competitive men" (Bolin 93). The threat of testosterone-loaded women, not health-issues, made steroids "unacceptable" at this time. Regulations were quickly put into place to police the female body; promoters were seeking mass appeal, and in order to make women's bodybuilding marketable, the competitors had to be desirable. This meant that the women could not push the boundaries of traditional femininity too far.

In "Pumping Irony: The Muscular and the Feminine," Alan Mansfield and Barbara McGinn list the effects of steroid usage in women as including:

> enlarged clitoris, increased or decreased libido, decreased breast size, diminished menstruation, increased aggressiveness, acne, male pattern baldness and increased appetite. Some of these changes such as lowered voice and increased facial hair, may be permanent. (59-60)

Recall the description of the female bodybuilder in *Muscle*: "she wasn't quite a woman and she wasn't quite a man, but she was, unmistakably, a builder" (90). Similarly, when Fussell is at a competition, one of his female friends emerges from the women's changing room and describes with horror what she has seen: "The blond contestant...sported a startlingly long appendage which emanated from her shaved vaginal lips. It was a result of her supplementation program. Her rosebud had grown to the size of a California redwood" (234-

235). Such unconventional representations of "women" impedes promotion of the sport. Men's bodies can support the extra muscularity that signifies a heightened masculinity, but the masculinization of women's bodies because of steroid use is a marketing hurdle that the sport's promoters soon recognized as a threat to its potential popularity.

Issues of femininity and muscularity have been at the forefront from the inception of the sport. Since *Pumping Iron II*, there has been no resolution to the controversy over judging women's bodybuilding competitions. And as Bolin argues, "the promoters of bodybuilding desire legitimacy and respectability" (91). Because it is a big business, "the industry, in seeking mass appeal is de facto influencing judging criteria and the selection of winners" (Bolin 91). More so than with male bodybuilding, the sport of female bodybuilding is intent upon enticing new recruits by appealing to their desire to be firm and fit, and their desire to remain feminine. The sport is not marketed as a space where traditional gender boundaries are blurred or challenged; rather it is marketed as an opportunity for women to obtain "hard" bodies, without abandoning the softer, more feminine characteristics. In other words, female bodybuilding, with its close association to beauty, is merely another "sport" intent upon obtaining an aesthetic goal. Again, the fit body of the female bodybuilder is not a body capable of performing any particular feats (such as excelling in swimming, running, etc.); on the contrary, it is a body to be looked at. Women have long been the object of the gaze; this is not a new role.

Yet despite bodybuilding's increasing popularity, and despite the general acceptance and even demand that women be physically fit, "at no time [in history] has the muscled woman been regarded as a paragon of beauty. Muscles and femininity are representationally exclusive categories" (Bolin 88). Women can have *toned* and *hard* bodies, but extensive

muscularity has always been reserved for the male body. So how do we explain the growing number of female bodybuilders in competitions? What do we do with the photos of these top competitors in magazines such as *Muscle & Fitness*, where their excess muscle appears to have found a home?

Bodybuilding, unlike other sports or beauty methods, employs every aspect of bodily surveillance. Cosmetic surgery, adherence to diets, intense working out, and a rigorous performance of the current cultural ideals of beauty, all play a role. Because bodybuilding is so appearance oriented, and because it epitomizes the consuming subject, Grosz argues that it is not enough to analyze bodybuilding through "a psychology of self-control" (*Volatile* 143). She takes issue with the work of Susan Bordo and Sandra Lee Bartky, who both follow what Grosz calls "the more common feminist concern with the 'ideology' of the norms of beauty and the desire for self-control that patriarchal power relations impose on women, with or without women's knowledge" (143). Unlike Bordo and Bartky, Grosz balks at the notion that certain bodily inscriptions "signal women's acceptance of and absorption into prevailing patriarchal paradigms" (144). Rather than trying to understand the psychical imperatives of engaging in beauty ideals which "risk duplicating the mind/body dualism" (*Volatile* 144), Grosz looks to what is unexplored by the psychological approach: "an entire dimension of the ontology and sociopolitical status of the body itself. The very status of the body as product--the question is whose product?--remains at stake here" (143). Bodybuilding, with its amalgamation of beauty and fitness methods, clearly exposes that the body is a product.

Grosz acknowledges some usefulness in psychological investigations of body obsessions, but she does not make clear how one can investigate the body as a product *without* looking at the mind/body split that is part of Western consciousness. The body is

perceived as a product *because* of this very split, of the distancing between the active will of the mind over the resisting matter of the body. To make oneself over into a "new and improved" image involves *producing* or manufacturing oneself. But the seed for this transformation remains rooted in the mind, for the rhetoric of reformation clearly implies that the body can be controlled by a strong and determined mind. Bordo argues that the images of people working out and looking good contribute to the belief that by shaping your body, you shape your life. She states, "such associations are actually an appeal to the *will* (to 'will power' and 'control') and encourage an adversarial relationship to the body" (*Unbearable* 301). The mind/body split, then, is actively encouraged in the rhetoric of reformation. Therefore, the psychological investigations remain useful to an understanding of the discourses of possibility that lead individuals to believe that their bodies can be considered plastic.

There has yet to be a woman's autobiography of bodybuilding that compares to Fussell's critique of how the sport creates "iron casualties." Harry Crews's less than successful novel *Body* (1990), tells the story of a female bodybuilder, Shereel Dupont (née Dorothy Turnipseed) who devotes years of her life to training in the gym, and who attempts to win a championship competition in Miami Beach. Her decision to kill herself at the end of the novel because she fails to win the competition makes it difficult to read *Body* as a serious gesture towards understanding female bodybuilders. Crews's narrative, in all its predictable turns, renders it nothing more than a second-rate work utterly lacking in subtlety and artistic technique. I mention it simply because of the dearth of fictional and/or autobiographical representations of women's bodybuilding.

Hillary Johnson, on the other hand, in her short novel *Physical Culture* (1989), provides a more serious attempt to understand the masochism that exists in bodybuilding. Her focus is limited to male bodybuilding, yet the juxtaposition of masochism with constant training makes it worth mentioning at length. John, Hillary Johnson's masochistic narrator, not only mutilates and scars his own body, but he enjoys having others do it for him. As a result, beneath his clothes, his body is a scarred map of defilement, self-loathing, and masochistic pleasure:

> My nipples are rough and distended where they've been pierced. The left is covered by the livid brand of a heart; faint white razor lines spell DEATH TO THE ROTTEN BLOOD SUCKING PUKE LIZARDS ... across my rib cage; my chest is slashed beyond legibility and resembles the lacy grafted tissue of a burn victim; I know about the ground glass imbedded in my abdomen, and feel it every time I lean against a counter, but I haven't seen the gravelly skin before; there's a nondescript lump on my thigh where someone has buried a microfilm; my navel has been surgically altered to look like an embossed flower... (112)

Contrary to what this portrait depicts, John finds a comforting and "portable" privacy in his scarred body (104).

The extent of his self-isolation is better explained in the following passage: "When I first undressed in front of a sadist and exposed my harried skin to him, I was afraid, not of what he was about to do to me, but of what he would *think*--until I realized that he, too, was held wholly captive within himself" (104-105). This all-encompassing isolation is also

evident in Fussell's descriptions of the focused pursuit of bodily perfection through bodybuilding. While watching people work out in the gym, John notes:

> Physical Culture is culture in the operatic sense: it's drama and fiction and tragedy taken to a maudlin extreme, it's pretense and minuscule, futile omniscience, complete with stage blood and fat divas. Physical Culture, the art of body building--the willful distortion of muscle tissue to imitate the extremes suggested by real life--is bulging blood-and-guts opera. (126)

It is, to recall Klein's words, "a subculture of hyperbole" (3). By so closely juxtaposing bodybuilding with masochism, Johnson makes the two seem inseparable. Indeed, Fussell's vivid accounts of his steroid-filled needles grinding against bone illustrate this point well. But Johnson also depicts bodybuilding as a largely homosexual arena in which the body displays itself for the male gaze, not for female admiration.

But what is interesting about Johnson's book is how she ties it to a longer tradition of masochism and body obsession. Her title, *Physical Culture*, recalls the early movements of bodybuilding and the German physical culture movement. It was a young German man, Eugene Sandow, dubbed the World's Most Developed Man at the beginning of the twentieth century, who was most responsible for promoting bodybuilding in North America. Famous for being "the possessor of the world's best known body" (Dutton 124), Sandow opened gyms to capitalize on what he saw to be a lucrative market for devotees of the well-muscled body. In 1898, he began to publish a magazine; it was called *Physical Culture*.

The link, then, between masochism and fitness is firmly made in Johnson's novel. When the narrator of *Physical Culture* describes his first bout with masochism as a child, it seems a comparatively harmless pursuit. Feeling uncomfortable in his surroundings, he

retreats into the basement and smashes his thumb with a hammer. "For as long as my thumb throbbed," he remembers, "I didn't think about people knowing anything about me. I was in too much pain to care" (104). Juxtapose this passage with one from Fussell: "I'd experience whatever physical pain was necessary to cauterize my real pain, the pain I felt in being so vulnerable, so assailable" (75). In both cases, physical pain takes the men away from the emotional pain they are feeling. The masochistic John is not so different from the "diseased" Fussell.

Bodybuilding, with its deep-rooted connections to masochism, and its promotion of an individualism that encourages high levels of consumption that support and profit a free-market economy, remains a confusing terrain to negotiate. In the current craze for "health," bodybuilding means different things to men and women, and cannot be read the same way for both sexes. How are we to "read" bodybuilding? At the end of his article, Spring suggests that bodybuilding "signifies...a state of imbalance we've all known, and perhaps felt nowhere more strongly than in adolescence, say while reading a superheroes comic: the secret desire for power and glory struggling against an equally strong desire to hide, closeted in pain" (21). This passage might help to explain why more women are becoming competitive bodybuilders. Firstly, the "secret desire for power and glory" is a script that feminism has made available to young women. Consequently, they might pursue the illusion of personal freedom in bodybuilding. Secondly, remaining "closeted in pain" with all of its masochistic trimmings is a familiar environment. For if, as Bartky suggests, women are more prone to masochism than men,[7] bodybuilding provides a more "accepted" masochistic outlet.

The authors of "Masculinity on Stage" suggest that bodybuilding might offer us a way out of thinking in such rigidly defined sex and gender categories. They write: "When are

we going to stop worrying about masculinity or femininity and start thinking about just being people, all different and all important? In a way bodybuilding may develop as a step in precisely that direction" (Randall et al 67). Although the androgynous ideal of "just being people" seems a wonderful suggestion, Bordo argues that "In a culture that is *in fact* constructed by gender duality...one cannot be simply 'human.' This is no more possible than it is possible that we can 'just be people' in a racist culture....One cannot be gender-neutral in this culture" (*Unbearable* 241-42). As long as patriarchal capitalism has economic dominance, pursuing an androgynous ideal will remain non-transformative. Hence, even though women bodybuilders do "challenge" traditional gender roles, they cannot escape the categories of biological sex that locate them in a particular time and space. The move from a single-sex model to a two-sex model in the eighteenth-century effectively classified women's bodies as different from and inferior to men's bodies (Laqueur 6). We continue to battle this classification.

This desire to battle classification explains why self-creation is a dominant theme in bodybuilding circles. As Fussell states, "Bodybuilders aren't born, but made" (156). They're "landscape architects" (67) whose "fundamental task is reinvention" (117). The landscape they design is the human body, and capitalism is well-served by the number of products that must be purchased to pursue the elusive goal of the perfect body.

Conclusion

My purpose in this chapter has been to turn the spotlight away from the individual bodybuilder and towards the industry that encourages a slavish devotion to the very products it promotes. Bodybuilding has become a significant preoccupation of many North

Americans. As Alan Aycock reports in "The Confession of the Flesh: Disciplinary Gaze in Casual Bodybuilding," entrepreneurs such as "Steve Reeves, Rachel McLish, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Joyce Vedral, Lou Ferrigno, Lee Haney, and Cory Everson have enjoyed enormous profits from movies, videos, and manuals devoted to the entertainment and instruction of consumers" (338-39). The unpaid labour involved in trying to attain the body that reaps such monetary rewards is astronomical. Yet the bodybuilder as entrepreneur lives with the undying hope that properly managed, his or her carefully manufactured body might be capable of producing more value than was sunk into it in the first place.

An analysis of bodybuilding is critical because "It is a phenomenon that invites careful study by virtue of its pervasive influence upon our lives" (Aycock 338-339). Texts such as *Muscle* and *Léolo* unveil the discourse of desperation that enables the possibility for a counter-discourse to emerge, one that challenges the rhetoric that encourages consumers to believe they can have "any" body they like. Fussell's autobiography, in particular, with its stark descriptions of psychic anguish in the space *in between* the "before" and "after" photographs, goes a long way towards demystifying the purported ease of the transformation process.

Notes

1. Cited in Alan M. Klein's *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding, Subculture and Gender Construction*, 253.

2. For a more detailed analysis of the effects of classical Greek sculpture on contemporary representations of the perfect male body, see chapter 1 of Kenneth R. Dutton's *The Perfectible Body: The Western Ideal of Male Physical Development.*

3. For a lengthier analysis of philosophers' distinction between body and soul, see Elizabeth V. Spelman's "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views," and Ruth Berman's "From Aristotle's Dualism to Materialist Dialectics: Feminist Transformation of Science and Society."

4. Boxing remains one exception. See, for example, Wacquant's "Pugs at Work." In boxing, form and function do meet.

5. In post-Fordist times, the North American market is not acquiring new products at the high rate of previous decades. By contrast, countries such as China and India have a huge middle-class that does not view owning a dishwasher or washing machine as a basic necessity. Its market has not yet been glutted.

6. For a more concentrated study of homosexuality and bodybuilding, see Simpson's *Male Impersonators*, especially chapter two: "Big Tits! Masochism and Transformation in Bodybuilding."

7. See "Feminine Masochism and the Politics of Personal Transformation" in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression.* Here, Bartky argues that "Women are taught to be more inhibited and guilty about their

sexual desires than are men; hence the greater proneness of women to masochism" (53).

Chapter Three

From Solution to Syndrome: Eating Disorders for Profit

> Dieting is the forcible imposition of an ideal shape on a woman's body.
>
> Rosalind Coward (105)

In an episode of the popular TV comedy *Seinfeld*, every time George, who is dating a model, takes her out to eat, she goes to the washroom immediately after finishing her meal. When George mentions this curious behaviour to Jerry, the latter concludes that she is "refunding." Jerry bases his assumption on the fact that many models have eating disorders. The remainder of the show focuses on George's obsession to catch her in the act. Does she, or doesn't she? George, in his usual self-centred fashion, is concerned *not* with the woman's health, but with the fear he might be wasting his money. Why, he wonders, should he pay for something if she just "refunds" it later?

Jerry's euphemism for purging has definite economic connotations and highlights the fact that George's discomfort with the possibility of his date's bulimia centres on his own profound anxiety about new and unstable methods of exchange. Here, traditional behaviour associated with dating (he buys her something, she accepts it) is "thrown up," literally, into disarray. Adding "refunding" to the traditional equation destabilizes the exchange. George's obsessive desire to catch her in the act (he follows her into a restaurant bathroom) is fueled by an outraged sense of justice; again, it is not her health that concerns him, but his belief that she is stealing from him. By "refunding" without his knowledge, she is somehow "cashing in" on his generosity.

The economic metaphors for bulimia could be extended, but the most interesting point about this episode stems from knowing that in order for comedy to work, material must be drawn from a shared cultural knowledge. Much like the infamous *Seinfeld* episode on masturbation (in which the word is never mentioned but everybody *knows* what is being referred to), the success of the "refunding" episode depends upon a common cultural knowledge of eating disorders. We can laugh at George's comical attempts to "catch her in the act" because we can imagine ourselves following similar actions to satisfy suspicions about a friend or loved one. In other words, eating disorders are firmly planted in our cultural consciousness, alongside other obsessive actions which accompany the pursuit of a body ideal.

As a small barometer of contemporary culture, *Seinfeld* draws regularly upon the relationship between consumerism and the ideal body. One episode involves a discussion of plastic surgery and whether a woman should have her nose "fixed," and another has George, Jerry, Kramer and Elaine all wondering about the authenticity of a woman's breasts--are they "real," or are they implants? Again, the comedy works in these instances precisely because the beauty, diet and fitness industries have succeeded in capturing an entire society's cultural imagination. But this shared cultural knowledge also indicates the degree to which capitalism controls and alters our perceptions of what is acceptable, desirable, and also repulsive about the body.

Television, advertising, magazines, movies, literature, and other popular discourses encourage further capitalist accumulation by equating the technologized body with success. Whether these representations operate merely as mimesis--re-presenting objects that already exist--or whether, as Iser argues, fictional representations present *new* objective correlatives

(to borrow Eliot's term), determines the extent to which the status quo is being supported or, possibly, undermined. My interest in exploring the relationship between the rhetoric of reformation and corporate ties that determine the body's "status quo" remains linked to changing modes of employment. As I argue throughout, attaining gainful employment increasingly depends upon an individual's appearance. The gross body, therefore, changes not necessarily *by choice*, but out of economic need, becoming a technologized body in order to increase employment opportunities. Beauty ideologies attempt to obfuscate the reality of this economic exploitation while they simultaneously direct the gross body to become a technologized body.

In late capitalism, a myriad of products regulate and control the body, products that are marketed to insure a standardized look and behaviour. The trajectory of this increased market surveillance can be traced through capitalism's early development and its more recent transformation to a de-centralized, global market. In the pre-industrial society of Rabelais, for example, self-fashioning indicated a means of submission to a power outside the self, such as God and the Church. Yet in conjunction with the "official" culture of the early sixteenth century, a culture pious and God-fearing, there existed an active folk culture that mocked the ideal of "purity" through its depictions of the grotesque body.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin attentively analyses Rabelais' world of carnival and the traditional popular-festive forms that operated as minor revolts against the established social order. Rabelais' depictions of carnival, and the carnival itself, were served as political acts of resistance against oppressive laws of the state. The carnival created a dialogue focused on death and birth, food and excrement, the devouring and devoured body, in a kind of grotesque realism received on a highly comic note. Rabelais gives us, in other

words, images that a contemporary audience does not like--vivid depictions of bodily secretions, excrement, vomit, etc. Yet these "repulsive" or grotesque bodily acts were not used to create a market that sells self-surveillance; on the contrary, the attention to both sides of life (high and low, food and excrement) enabled the carnival to challenge religious concepts, as well as authority and social law. Themes such as "copulation, pregnancy, birth, eating, drinking, and death" were the main images of "the grotesque body and of grotesque bodily processes" (Bakhtin 355). The folk culture in which these themes proliferated and were consumed acted as an unofficial culture of the Middle Ages, in conjunction with an "official," church-sanctioned mode of existence that could safely be ridiculed and mocked within the confines of the carnival.

Rabelais' pre-industrialized body exists in his carnivalesque world, a world based on a tradition of folk literature, not on the development of a strong individual subjectivity. Not until the sixteenth century do we witness a marked growth in individual subjectivity. As Stephen Greenblatt argues in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2). This self-fashioning, however, took place primarily in the realm of language (Greenblatt 9). Hence, books such as Machiavelli's *Prince* (1513) and Castiglione's *Courtier* (1528) were designed to educate their readers about how self-fashioning could be accomplished through language. Parlour games based on who could deliver the most flattering speech were one way a man or woman could use language to construct an identity. Self-fashioning at this time, although entirely connected to the wealthy class, was still divorced from a capitalist network of mass distribution. Granted, a publishing market in self-fashioning (conduct books) increasingly

developed, but the means of distribution remained limited. In addition, access to this mode of self-fashioning was not available to everyone, as class and literacy largely determined who could acquire such material.

Indeed, the late sixteenth century witnessed a growth in literature as an identifiable market. Suzanne W. Hull, in *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640*, documents some revealing statistics about the burgeoning publishing industry from the sixteenth to seventeenth century. "The total number of books classified as literature in 1570 (and again in 1580) was more than twice the number in 1550" (7). "At the same time," she continues, "fiction and recreational literature became a proportionately greater part of the book market" (7). Unlike Rabelais' writing, with its vast descriptions of bodily fluids and bawdy behaviour intended to be subversive against the state, the growth and popularity of conduct literature and practical guidebooks informed readers how to behave "properly." Conduct material instructed women how to control bodily fluids, how to keep acts from appearing "repulsive," yet the conduct books simultaneously defined the perception of repulsive, thus placing the responsibility of regulating the body on the individual, who could purchase a range of products to help her achieve the desired control. Thus self-fashioning moved from a language-centered activity in the pre-capitalist sixteenth century, to a more product-centred orientation as it entered the inaugural stages of capitalism in the mid-eighteenth century.

The inextricable relationship of publishing and capitalism has created an environment in which literature can be widely produced to control and shape the body's desires. The conduct literature of the past is reproduced in today's self-help books, which consistently generate high sales and bring solid economic returns for publishers. The

publishing market in late capitalism is a strong and economically successful industry, controlled and regulated by the market forces of capitalism, forces that operate with profit in mind.

My purpose here is not to provide a detailed discussion of past literature, but rather to situate literature within capitalism, and to identify how subjectivity has been shaped by market forces. For example, Helena Michie's study of the Victorian novel, *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies*, illustrates how conduct literature operated as a powerful force to persuade women to emulate "proper" modes of feminine behaviour. In her first chapter, entitled "Ladylike Anorexia: Hunger, Sexuality, and Etiquette in the Nineteenth Century," Michie identifies etiquette books as the primary source of female instruction. It was here, Michie contends, that they learned how society (i.e. men) read women's public displays towards food, and how to "properly" control their food consumption.

Michie's analysis of etiquette books reveals that an "aesthetics of deprivation" operated with regard to women and food, an aesthetics which "forced eating to become a private activity and abstemiousness a public avowal of femininity" (20). Not surprisingly, therefore, the "portrait of the appropriately sexed woman emerges as one who eats little and delicately. She is as sickened by meat as by sexual desire" (17). Such a finicky relationship with food became a symptom of what the Victorians called "greensickness" (chlorosis). As Michie notes in *The Flesh Made Word*,

> the century's most influential and most reprinted sex manual, *Aristotle's Master-Piece*, the author describes 'greensickness,' a disease common to virgins which manifests itself in a 'loathing of meat' and of 'raw or burnt flesh.' Although he clearly regards this condition as a disease which must be

> cured in order for women to embrace marriage successfully, he makes it equally obvious that the illness can be used as a test of virginity. (16)

By this logic, a woman's "healthy" appetite would be interpreted as belonging to a "lusty" nature.

However, not all writers of etiquette books supported the "ladylike anorexia" that was fashionable at the time. In *The Bazarre Book of Decorum* (1870), the author laments the parallel drawn between eating and women's "coarseness," and writes: "It is a marvel that some of them manage to keep body and soul together with the apparent regimen of starvation to which they subject themselves" (Michie 20). The key words in this passage are "apparent regimen," for as the author notes, not all women who publicly declined food were in fact privately abstemious as well:

> It is not that they [women] absolutely starve themselves to death, for many of the most abstemious at the open dinner are the most voracious at the secret luncheon. Thus the fastidious dame whose gorge rises before company at the sight of a single pea, will on the sly swallow cream tarts by the dozen, and caramels and chocolate drops by the pound's weight. (Michie 19)

Accordingly, women who desired to eat in a socially unacceptable manner were forced into committing private acts of indiscretion. But the above passage also illustrates that while women were aware of the frivolity of such public abstinence (as their private sessions of gorging would indicate), they were also aware that public abstinence was crucial to their future economic prospects. Indeed, the future employment--marriage--of middle-class women depended on their conveying the "proper" social codes.

At a time when sexual conservatism was strong, the close relationship between women's eating and women's sexuality forced the public consumption of food into the private realm. *The Bazarre Book of Decorum* describes the acceptable process of binge eating that we now refer to as bulimia. Its description of the "secret luncheon" effectively instructs women how to *appear* feminine in public, while it provides them with an escape from dire hunger. The shift between George Cheyne's advice in 1724, warning those in search of a large girth to abstain from gorging themselves, to *The Bazarre Book of Decorum*'s instructions in 1870, teaching women how to partake in "secret luncheons," marks more than just a change in the views about "proper" weight; it also documents the move from eating in a public space, to consuming food privately or secretly--from enjoying food, to feeling guilty about eating. But the shift documents as well a move towards individual agency, because maintaining the proper relationship with food becomes a problem for the individual: she has the *choice* whether or not to follow the suggestions found in the conduct literature. If the proper result is not achieved, the blame is all her own.

The internalization of blame is everywhere evident in contemporary literary attempts to portray anorexia. Women are depicted punishing themselves and accepting full responsibility for their changing and fat-accumulating bodies. Obsessive rituals with food are not meant as offerings to God or to the church (as with the earlier Saints), but rather are a stark indication of an all-consuming and pathological somatic fixation.

In his poem "Ellen West" (1977), the American poet Frank Bidart draws our attention to "the first well-documented case" of anorexia nervosa and compulsive overeating (Casper 12). The case study was conducted by Ludwig Binswanger, a Swiss existential

phenomenologist, who treated "Ellen West"[1] for a severe eating disorder in 1944. West vacillated wildly between periods of dieting and abstinence from food, and periods of binge eating. Her weight fluctuated between 90 and 160 pounds; at her worst, Bidart writes, drawing on the historical record, she "takes sixty to seventy tablets of a vegetable laxative, with the result that she suffers tortured vomiting at night and violent diarrhea by day, often accompanied by a weakness of the heart" (31).

Bidart's poem is unusual in its incorporation of whole sections lifted directly from Binswanger's clinical reports, as well as in its use of excerpts from West's personal diary (also documented by Binswanger). As a result, "Ellen West" reads as part dramatic monologue, and part clinical diagnosis. The juxtaposition of a distanced medical commentary with an anguished personal account of suffering illustrates the vast discrepancy between physical appearance and mental torment. For example, the day before West kills herself, Bidart tells us that her appetite is good, and that she acted "in a positively festive mood" (Bidart 43). That night, however, she takes a lethal dose of poison. Although West's outward behaviour indicates improvement, her suicide confirms that her psychic anguish has not diminished.

"I love sweets," the poem begins, "heaven / would be dying on a bed of vanilla ice cream." It continues:

> But my true self
> is thin, all profile
>
> and effortless gestures, the sort of blond
> elegant girl whose

body is the image of her soul.

--My doctors tell me I must give up
this ideal;
but I
WILL NOT ... cannot.

Only to my husband I'm not simply a "case."

But he is a fool. He married
meat, and thought it was a wife.

Right from the beginning, the speaker locates herself in a struggle between her "true self," the "ideal" which is thin, and the fleshy body she inhabits (evidenced by the pejorative description of her body as "meat"). In addition, we learn of her obsessive inability to listen to the doctors, to give up her solipsistic "WILL" to achieve an ideal.

"Ellen West" is a long poem broken into twelve sections. With each one, we witness the speaker's decline in health, both mental and physical. In the fifth section, we delve further into the speaker's mind and learn that, "Even as a child," she "loathed" the "'natural' process of aging." "I shall *defeat* 'Nature,'" she vows, and begins to "wear weights secretly sewn into [her] belt" at the hospital when nurses weigh her (33-34). But most striking of all is the speaker's anguished torment in section eight, when she attempts to understand her "hunger which can have no cause" (38).

When I open my eyes in the morning, my great

mystery

stands before me ...

--I *know* that I am intelligent; therefore

the inability not to fear food
day-and-night; this unending hunger
ten minutes after I have eaten...
a childish
dread of eating; (38)

The section concludes: "trying to stop my hunger with FOOD / is like trying to appease thirst / with ink" (40). The "hunger" is the problem; food merely acts as a symptom of a larger issue. Interestingly, Bidart's reference to "appeas[ing] thirst / with ink," links the anorexic obsession to that of the artist's, as though to suggest that the anorexic is equally driven by the desire for self-creation.

Bidart's poem pays tribute to the "real" Ellen West who battled valiantly, yet unsuccessfully, with an eating disorder. Her excessive bouts of gorging, followed by starvation and laxative abuse, are well-documented by her analyst, her own diaries, and now by Bidart. The intertextuality of medical documentation and autobiography creates a poem that offers readers provocative insights into both "real" and fictional representations of eating disorder sufferers. "Ellen West" succinctly exposes the psychic pain that accompanies bulimia. "I am crippled," the speaker asserts (44); watching someone else lose weight is like "watching / autobiography" (37). She envies Maria Callas, who, gossip maintained, "had

swallowed a tapeworm" and lost weight (35). But the speaker understands the metaphorical substitution of tapeworm for Callas' true self, and imagines that Callas' soul must have delighted in "eating the flesh from her bones" (36). The speaker, in other words, understands that as long as the body "ideal" holds such power, she cannot live peacefully (or live at all) in the "real" world.

The final section of "Ellen West" takes the form of a letter written to a fellow patient to whom the speaker had become attached. At this point, the speaker accepts full responsibility for her illness and for her suicide. "I disappoint you," she writes,

> --How eager I have been
> to compromise, to kill this *refuser*,--
>
> but each compromise, each attempt
> to poison an ideal
> which often seemed to *me* sterile and unreal,
>
> heightens my hunger. (43-44)

The "refuser" part of her remains unable to give up the ideal, and it finally kills her. In the end, the unrelenting anguish she experiences on a daily basis drives her to suicide.

There is little difference between the self-hatred of bulimics and that of anorexics. Indeed, both suffer from a distorted body image, and both desire freedom from corporeal restraint. In her poem, "Imagine a Picture," the Canadian poet Alison Calder attempts to capture the bodily aims of the anorexic:

Imagine a picture of your sister or your daughter
and stretch it out. Do not stop pulling.
Stretch until the bones jut, until the body
reveals the frame. Stretch until all you see
are bones and eyes. This is a woman
who sends herself to sleep by counting ribs.
Rolls of quarters fit inside her hipbones.
Her elbows are as sharp as the corners of a mirror.
At night she dreams herself a feast.
The first dish is her thigh. The second is her belly.
All day she devours herself.

.....

By using photography to distance us from the subject in the poem, Calder makes her readers passive onlookers to a woman's slow death. The woman whose "bones jut," who is only "bones and eyes," and who, because of her chronic hunger, "dreams herself a feast" all night long, is locked in an antagonistic struggle with her body. Yet the feast she dreams is not the conventional table full of succulent delights; instead, she imagines devouring her own body, bit by bit: "The first dish is her thigh. The second is her belly." All night she dreams of consuming her flesh, and "All day she devours herself."

The anorexic, locked in a never-ending battle with her body, is heavy with self-loathing, heavy with the belief that she is out of control, that her body will win. Here, she puts herself to sleep by "counting ribs," a stark indication of how thin she has become, all the while exhibiting her psychic obsession--how to trim her thighs, flatten her belly? The poem

goes on to explore how lost the anorexic is, how "Other people's voices/fit inside her mouth," and ends with her trying "to remember her reflection in a mirror." The body as jailer and as deceiver are two primary themes in this poem, for no matter how much the anorexic tries to ignore hunger, her appetite is always present; the only thing she can do, that remains in her control, is to turn her hunger on herself, to literally imagine that the meal she eats is a disobedient body part.

Calder's poem provides a wonderfully complex portrait of the anorexic that does not isolate the subject from the scrutiny of family and friends, and the pain they suffer when watching a loved one starve herself to death. By inviting readers to "imagine," and by asking them to participate in the stretching of the image/body, Calder suggests this could be *any* woman (take a picture, any picture) and that this image exists close to us, is something we are familiar with and continually surrounded by. Hence, even though it directly speaks to someone's sister or daughter, the photographic apparatus distances us, making us anxious voyeurs to an individual's psychic pain.

Like Calder, the Irish writer Eavan Boland explores the issue of how a body is gendered and the effects of this gendering. In her poem, "Anorexic," the speaker views her body as "a witch," and the switch from first person to third person is an effective device that illustrates how the anorexic sees her body as something outside of herself. The poem begins,

> Flesh is heretic.
>
> My body is a witch.
>
> I am burning it.
>
> Yes I am torching

her curves and paps and wiles.

They scorch in my self denials.

The "I" in the poem is punishing the "her," the fleshy "witch" that is, in fact, herself.

I vomited

her hungers.

Now the bitch is burning.

I am starved and curveless.

I am skin and bone.

She has learned her lesson.

Again, as Calder's poem in which the photographic image of the anorexic is used as an "othering" device, Boland's poem clearly captures the anorexic's dilemma of being both inside and outside of her body--both participant and onlooker.

The ending of Boland's poem introduces religious imagery that effectively provides a summation of how women's bodies have been perceived over the centuries.

Caged so

I will grow

angular and holy

past pain,

keeping his heart

such company

as will make me forget

in a small space

the fall

into forked dark

into python needs

heaving to hips and breasts

and lips and heat

and sweat and fat and greed.

We move from the "heretic" behaviour and hatred of witches ("the bitch is burning") that starts the poem, through to the biblical imagery of the speaker, "Thin as a rib," "holy" companion to Adam, witness to "the fall," the curse of the snake, and the ever-after hatred of the female body. This hatred is largely based on a loathing of sex, as the imagery suggests. The anorexic is "torching" her "wiles," and vomiting a hunger not only for food, but for sex. She becomes "starved and curveless," de-sexualized, and this forced punishment, she believes, will help her to forget her "python needs" and the "heaving" and "lips and heat/and sweat" of the sexual act. The final three lines of the poem, with the repeated link of "and," powerfully denote how much (this and that and) of the body there is to hate. Moving from the anatomical ("hips and breasts/and lips"), to the internal ("heat"), to the final images of gluttony, sloth, and lust ("sweat and fat and greed"), Boland stuns us with the magnitude of the anorexic's self-loathing. The repetition of single-syllable words ("hips and breasts/and lips and heat/and sweat and fat and greed") mimics, in its sing-song rhythm, the neverending

catalogue of hated body parts, as if the speaker is literally spitting them out, one fleshy piece at a time.

Through its references to historical misogyny, largely linked to religion and the misogynist role of women in the church, Boland's poem places the self-hatred of the anorexic within an historical context that renders anorexia understandable. Such a stance bolsters the arguments that a strong cultural critique is required to battle eating disorders. In *Unbearable Weight*, Bordo maintains that eating disorders are "utterly continuous with a dominant element of the experience of being female in this culture" (57). Indeed, Boland's poem acknowledges anorexia as the likely consequence of being female in Western culture, and therefore concedes that anorexic behaviour can be learned.

Feminist theorist Caroline Bynum also agrees that anorexia is a learned behaviour. She states:

> No behavior with a purely biological cause could fluctuate as drastically in incidence as anorexia is agreed to do. The behavior, then, whatever basis it may in some cases have in the physiology and the family history of individuals, is also, in the very particular form it takes, learned; and it is learned from a culture that has complex and long-standing traditions about women, about bodies, and about food. Whatever biological or psychological underpinnings it may have, twentieth-century anorexia has a cultural context. (198)

Calder's "Imagine a Picture," and Boland's "Anorexic" clearly reveal the cultural underpinnings of anorexia. The fear and disgust of body-fat in both these poems carries

immense power because, in a culture that perpetuates fat-discrimination, the revulsion is shared not only by the poems' speakers, but also, very likely, by the readers.

From the constant imperative used by Calder ("Imagine," "Stretch"), to the confident pronouncement opening Boland's poem ("Flesh is heretic"), the American Louise Glück's "Dedication to Hunger" compassionately attempts to explain how young girls are drawn into anorexia. Part 4 of the five section poem is titled "The Deviation," and it reads as follows:

> It begins quietly
> in certain female children:
> the fear of death, taking as its form
> dedication to hunger,
> because a woman's body
> *is* a grave; it will accept
> anything. I remember
> lying in bed at night
> touching the soft, digressive breasts,
> touching, at fifteen,
> the interfering flesh
> that I would sacrifice
> until the limbs were free
> of blossom and subterfuge: I felt
> what I feel now, aligning these words--
> it is the same need to perfect,
> of which death is the mere byproduct.

Glück's portrait of anorexia's initial onslaught at puberty hinges on the anorexic's need to be perfect and, therefore, in control of her body. However, the terms used to describe flesh are both complimentary and condemning, setting up an interesting tension between the desire to *accept* the changing body, and a straight refusal to do so. The flesh is "soft" and a "blossom," while concurrently it exists as a "subterfuge" and is "interfering."

Yet Glück's poem pushes the anorectic act out of, or beyond, its ritual past, and into contemporary capitalism. By using the term "byproduct," (a secondary product or result), she associates anorexia with a capitalist means of production that focuses solely on returns. Because death is described as "the mere byproduct" of the anorexic's desire to be slim, the poem draws attention to the lies implicit in capitalism's pervasive rhetoric of reformation. To "sacrifice" the body until "the limbs [are] free," *knowing full well* that death may be the result, highlights the incredibly seductive power of the rhetoric of reformation and its ability to turn the body into a product in need of improvement. This distancing has the effect of turning the body into "a" body, rather than "my" body. Hence in this poem, as in the two previous poems, the speaker moves from the first person to a more distant connection with herself. Her body is not "my body"; rather, it is referred to as "the limbs."

As the above poems illustrate, a single-minded focus to discipline and to control the body (and female sexuality) unites the anorexics. Yet external forces also act upon the young women, who are being interpellated into a system that values and rewards obedient women. Patriarchal capitalism depends upon women's compliance with an economic system that exploits their labour. The anorexic who desires to live "without a body" (Bidart), who counts her ribs as she falls asleep (Calder), who hates her "curves and paps" (Boland), and who believes her body "is a grave" (Glück), might be "opting out" of this repressive system by

refusing to work within it (one does not work, for example, if one is hospitalized). But her struggle of mind over matter, and self over Other remains isolated to her personal relationship with the world, and is not directed towards an overall emancipatory politics for women. In other words, anorexics have no overt political agenda; they are not hunger strikers intent on transforming exploitative patriarchal institutions.

As the number of anorexics and bulimics has grown, some theorists have attempted to "transform anorexia nervosa into the contemporary moral equivalent of the hunger strikers associated with early-twentieth-century English suffragists such as Emmeline and Sylvia Pankhurst" (Brumberg 36). Maggie Helwig is guilty of this comparison when, in "A Certain Hunger: The Body Language of Anorexia," she argues that anorexia "symbolically" can be read as "a hunger strike" (347). But as Brumberg argues, "If the anorectic's food refusal is political in any way, it is a severely limited and infantile form of politics, directed primarily at parents (and self) and without any sense of allegiance to a larger collectivity." In other words, she continues, "Anorectics, not known for their sisterhood, are notoriously preoccupied with the self" (37).

In a fascinating comparison of anorexics and hunger-strikers, Maud Ellman's *The Hunger Artist* depoliticizes the modern anorexic's obsessive devotion to an ideal. In contrast to anorexics, hunger-strikers make a political statement, have a goal in mind, and resume eating as soon as their demands are met. They starve "in the name of a collective...and their martyrdom confer[s] identity on their respective groups" (6-7). But the modern anorexic starves with no political agenda, on behalf of no collective, and only for "herself." Such a distinction, however, does not stop some theorists from reading anorexia purely on the symbolic level.

Another example of how anorexia is being claimed as a means of feminist resistance against patriarchy can be found in Elspeth Cameron's article on Margaret Atwood's novel, *The Edible Woman*. Many critics have claimed that the protagonist, Marian McAlpin, is one of the first fictional characters exhibiting symptoms of anorexia nervosa. Cameron, for one,[2] in "Famininity, or Parody of Autonomy: Anorexia Nervosa and *The Edible Woman*," uses the term "eating disorder" very broadly to include a simple loss of appetite due to stress and/or depression. According to Cameron, Marian "exhibits almost all the main characteristics of an anorexic: 'enmeshment' with a parental figure, a feeling of ineffectiveness, fear of fat, and above all the longing for autonomy" (45).

However, Cameron's argument relies heavily on the second section of the book in which Marian discusses herself in the third person. The mind/body split that accompanies anorexia and leads anorexics to describe their bodies in the third person appears to be a universal trait. In the first section, however, the entire narrative is structured around food and Marian's hunger. As Linda Hutcheon notes, "the first twenty-five pages of the novel...move from breakfast...to peanuts...to taste-testing some rice pudding to coffee break to lunch to dinner" (316). Marian only loses her appetite in part II of the novel. However, at no point in the narrative does she diet. This is a crucial point, because lack of appetite (anorexia) differs drastically from anorexia *nervosa* (denial of hunger in the face of plenty). In the latter, an unremitting desire to lose weight motivates the dieter. The devoted pursuit of slimness is, therefore, the determining feature in anorexia nervosa. Marian does exhibit a disgust for the fleshiness of women's bodies, as in the scene when she scrutinizes her co-workers' physiques and is "suffocated by this thick sargasso-sea of femininity" (167), but she does not turn this microscopic gaze on herself.

Cameron acknowledges that "Marian nowhere states that she wants to become thin....By her own account, her progressive restriction of foods has more to do with the sense that they were once alive and have been aggressively destroyed than with their fattening characteristics" (59). Cameron might do better, then, to read *The Edible Woman* as a vegetarian manifesto rather than as an example of a novel about anorexia nervosa. The fact that Marian is back to eating steak in Part Three (311), however, would render such a reading irrelevant. But that she returns to eating *at all*, and that the first thing she eats is a piece of cake (301) (it is inconceivable that an anorexic would eat cake at her first meal), also reveals the inadequacy of reading Marian as an anorexic. Marian is far removed from the speaker in Bidart's poem, who has an "unending hunger" that cannot be satisfied, and from the speaker in Boland's poem, whose body-hatred is released in denigrating terms about her body, and who desires to torch "her curves and paps and wiles." Nor does Marian exhibit an unquestioning belief in the rhetoric of reformation, as does the speaker in Glück's poem. Indeed, Marian's struggle is not with her body, but with a society that sees women as objects to be devoured. Or, as Hutcheon argues, "*not* eating, in this novel, is directly connected with being a woman, of course, but more precisely, with being a woman in a specifically male-dominated consumer society" (316).

In short, to read Marian McAlpin as an anorexic is to trivialize the very complex and painful symptoms that accompany the disorder. Anorexia may be, in Susie Orbach's words, "a metaphor for our time" (*Hunger Strike*); however, to use it solely on the symbolic level as a clever strategy for analyzing a brief cessation of eating ignores its devastating effects. Put more strenuously, Bordo contends that if "the body is treated as pure text, subversive, destabilizing elements can be emphasized and freedom and self-determination celebrated;

but one is left wondering, is there a *body* in this text" (38). If we accept Cameron's argument, then Marian "wins" her struggle with anorexia. By beginning to eat again, she "cures" herself of the debilitating disease. But to classify Marian as anorexic is to ignore that eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any psychological disorder.

The anorexic's microscopic preoccupation and struggle with the self, as illustrated in the above poems, highlights the psychic anguish and profound hatred of flesh ("meat") that accompanies anorexia and bulimia. The poems emphasize the unspoken revelation that dieting--a focused desire to trim the body--is where it all begins. To mix traits of perfectionism with the practice of dieting invites trouble, for the "perfect" dieter is Kafka's hunger artist. The perfect dieter disappears altogether and becomes "a grave."

As I have already stated, eating disorders are not strictly a twentieth-century phenomenon. However, there is a link between a capitalist economy that promotes individual agency and autonomy, and the increased incidence of eating disorders (which I will return to later). While every age has its beauty ideals, the contemporary emphasis on and access to various communication systems (from the publishing industry to the booming video market, and from television to film) enables a homogenization of these ideals to prevail. Yet I would be remiss to leave the impression that these ideals are static, for capitalism thrives on the renewed consumption levels stimulated by new beauty trends and ideals. To understand how a capitalist economy provides an hospitable venue for the existence of eating disorders, we must return to earlier descriptions of anorexia and bulimia in pre-capitalist economies, and trace their expansion as capitalism began to take hold. In the following discussion of the historical existence of eating disorders, I use contemporary terms, but hope to make clear

that each period had its own interpretation of what these terms signified. Because eating disorders are not only a twentieth-century phenomena, an analysis of their origins needs to avoid attributing contemporary definitions to historical periods.

Historical Representations

There are a number of historical antecedents to our current understanding of bulimia and anorexia as a syndrome. From the first medical mention of bulimia in *The Physical Dictionary* (1708), the term has consistently been found in medical references.[3] Bulimia (from the Greek *boulimia*, *bou*--oxlike, great, and *limos*--hunger) is known as ox-hunger, the great hunger and/or the canine appetite. The earliest evidence of a bulimic-like activity comes from the folklore of the Roman vomitoriums, where public displays of gorging incorporated an accepted (indeed, expected) period of purging. The bulimic act, in this instance, was not a punishment directed against the body, but one that enabled banquet-goers to extend their stay at the table. Here, vomiting served as a means of prolonging pleasure.

But in the famine-plagued Europe of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, hunger and starvation were a stark reality. Caroline Bynum discusses how people's relationship with food changes when there is a shortage. In *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, she outlines how the literature during this period contained "Vicious stories--of food-hoarding merchants, of cannibalism, of infanticide, of sick adolescents left to die when they could no longer work" (2). The prevalence of these stories suggests that starvation was a pervasive condition. Yet existing in conjunction with these desperate tales was a folk literature that denied such painful deprivations by describing massive feasts and culinary satiety. "Small wonder," Bynum

argues, "that gorging and vomiting, luxuriating in food until food and body were almost synonymous, became in folk literature an image of unbridled sensual pleasure" (2).[4] Between these two extremes of viciousness towards neighbours and unbridled gorging at feasts, arose the medieval ideal that the most basic asceticism came from "self-starvation, the deliberate and extreme renunciation of food and drink.... [for] To repress eating and hunger was to control the body in a discipline far more basic than any achieved by shedding the less frequent and essential gratifications of sex or money" (Bynum 2). In addition, by repressing bodily hunger, individuals were joining forces with religious orders whose "most common charities...was to feed the poor and ill, pilgrims and wanderers" (Bynum 2). To deny one's self was to potentially satisfy the needs of others. The extent to which certain late medieval women embraced fasting, to the point of obsession, has led some modern historians to believe that their stories preserve the earliest documentable cases of anorexia nervosa.

Bynum, however, disagrees with this diagnosis, and argues that the anorexia of medieval saints differs drastically from that of present-day sufferers. The "manifold meanings of food and its pervasiveness in religious symbolism" (5), she contends, disallow a simple interpretation of the role of food. Indeed, medieval women's self-starvation differs from the sufferings of present-day anorexics in that the former's abstinence often "was *imitation Christi*--a fusion with Christ's agony on the cross" (Bynum 211-12). In other words, a "holy anorexic," in her focused pursuit of spiritual perfection, had a firm commitment to an ideal that procured some societal recognition. The twentieth-century anorexic, on the other hand, secularized and without institutional affiliation, engages in anorexic practice in isolation. She is not imitating Christ; her higher ideal is concentrated solely on becoming thin, on meeting an ideal that is largely a media creation. She may

believe that acute thinness will bring her societal recognition, but at some point in her self-imposed starvation she will begin wearing bulky clothes to hide her emaciation.

Rudolph Bell's *Holy Anorexia* offers a careful study of anorexia among Italian women from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. Like Bynum, Bell believes the distinction between "holy anorexia" and contemporary anorexia nervosa is of extreme importance. The Saint Teresa of Avila who "regularly used an olive twig to induce vomiting so that she might receive the host without fear of rejecting it" (Bell 18), was motivated by very different societal pressures than the contemporary anorexic. Bell's distinction between the modifiers ("holy," "nervosa") provides us with a clearer historical understanding of this very complex physical and social disease. According to Bell,

> whether anorexia is holy or nervous depends on the culture in which a young woman strives to gain control of her life. In both instances anorexia begins as the girl fastens onto a highly valued societal goal (bodily health, thinness, self-control in the twentieth century/spiritual health, fasting, and self-denial in medieval Christendom). (20)

If we look at holiness as the goal for a holy anorexic, and thinness as the goal for a present-day anorexic, then the two disorders appear very similar indeed. What they aspire towards differs, yet they take similar routes to achieve their ideal. What is missing from the holy anorexic's obsessive pursuit of spiritual purity, and what therefore sets it apart from anorexia nervosa, is the unremitting desire to be thin. Contemporary anorexics, in other words, rarely have strong religious affiliations, nor are their actions a result of material deprivation. Unlike the medieval anorexic, who practised asceticism at a time when hunger was largely a shared

cultural reality, the twentieth-century anorexic perceives herself as striving for the purely aesthetic, and starves in the midst of plenty.

Thus both Bynum and Bell make clear distinctions between the anorectic practices of medieval figures, and those practising self-starvation in the late twentieth century. Although compulsory slimness is a modern preoccupation, a trajectory of somatic concern can be traced in fiction beginning in the early eighteenth century. For example, in George Cheyne's *Essay of Health and Long Life* (1724), we see signs of a society that is more obsessed with gaining weight than with slimming. The corpulent Cheyne, notorious for not following his own health advice, had this to say about weight:

> a *fatal* Mistake those run into, who being *weakly, thin,* and *slender*, aim by all Means, at any Price, to become *plump* and *round*, and in order to obtain this are perpetually devouring huge Quantities of *high, strong* Food, and swallowing proportionable Measures of *generous* Liquors. (qtd in Rogers 171)

Cheyne's many health problems, undoubtedly linked to his overconsumption of rich foods and beverages, led him to offer his advice of moderation. As Pat Rogers documents in "Fat is a Fictional Issue: The Novel and the Rise of Weight-Watching," Cheyne's world is one "where the historic fear of wasting away dominated people's minds" (172). As a consequence, "fat could still be viewed as a sign of health, or sometimes of well-being generally" (181).

Cheyne's warning against over-consumption is just one example of instructional tracts concerned with good health. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the body was

receiving a more detailed study. Rogers, attributing the growing attention to body size and weight to the rise of the novel, writes:

> fat became a fictional issue, in the period roughly from 1750 to 1850, because the novel is the place above all where the physical is the sign of the inward, and where a kind of sizism can be exploited as part of an entire idiom and syntax drawn from corporeal matter. (168)

In other words, Rogers argues, the novel "drew increased attention to bodily size, because of its ability to focus on detail" (178).[3] Prior to 1750, emaciation was equated with illness, and the continuance of pulmonary consumption into the nineteenth century prolonged this equation (Rogers 172). Cheyne's warning was a necessary corrective to those who were damaging their bodies by over-imbibing to achieve a "healthier" appearance. Such correctives became even more necessary by the late nineteenth century, when obsessions with weighing oneself became popularized, due in part, Rogers argues, to the rise in popularity of the novel (172).

The transition from viewing fat as a social advantage to perceiving it as a social liability was a slow one. According to Rogers,

> It took a long time for the psychological and social assumptions surrounding body shape to change, and at first it was only the upper orders who consented to the change. They were sophisticated enough to have grasped that a heavy cargo of flesh could be no sure indication of good health, and rich enough not to have to demonstrate to the world that they were well fed. (181)

As time passed, fictional renderings of bodies in the nineteenth century became more refined (i.e. thinner). By the Victorian era the shift is apparent, and size becomes less of an indicator of wealth and status.

This brief synopsis of the changing perceptions of fat and its relationship to either power (wealth and prosperity) or depravity (sloth, laziness and gluttony), is useful for a number of reasons. First, it situates body ideals within a Western historical context which, in part, explains why a particular ideal is privileged. During food shortages and epidemics, for example, a thin body represented illness and potential death. Naturally, the contrast was a fat body, one that had access to food and, consequently, had the appearance of health. Second, the historical synopsis illustrates how, in later Victorian times, the relationship between fat and personal character became problematized. The body's shape was no longer perceived as the result of biological propensities (i.e. divinely bestowed); instead, it was seen to reflect an inner moral, or immoral, character.[6] Such typecasting based on physiognomy is evident in the Victorian novel: "Once a person might have been idle and crooked in nature because he was fat and misshapen; now he is fat and misshapen because he is crooked in nature" (Rogers 183). We witness a shift, then, in personal responsibility. No longer can "nature" be deemed responsible for a character's inward shortcomings (s/he is fat and therefore, by extension, greedy etc.); instead, the internal being of a character is mirrored by his or her external physique, now controlled by the individual (s/he is fat ***because*** s/he is greedy etc.). Bodies, then, evolved to become vehicles for personal expression--less something to be accepted, and more something that could be changed. And third, the historical synopsis helps to situate body concerns within a capitalist publishing industry that profited from selling proper body management through both conduct literature and the novel.

Contemporary Interpretations

The escalation of eating disorders into a significant social phenomenon arises, Bordo asserts, "at the intersection of patriarchal culture and post-industrial capitalism" (*Unbearable* 32). I prefer to use the term late capitalism, instead of post-industrial capitalism, to recognize both an historical shift, and also that industrial aspects remain a significant part of labour in late capitalism. Since the late 1960s, in particular, eating disorders have been steadily on the rise. Women have been the primary sufferers, although the increasing numbers of men afflicted with this condition (an estimated one million) offers cause for alarm. Whether eating disorders originate in a fear of oral impregnation (Freud), in increased exposure to media images of "ideal" beauty (Bruch 1978), in an inability of young women to merge their "newfound" autonomy and individualism with the traditional nurturance associated with femininity (Chernin, MacSween), in women's bid for control to counter their relative social powerlessness (Lawrence), in an attempt to control unexpressed emotional needs (Orbach 1986), or in a "confirmed negativity condition" (Claude-Pierre), eating disorders cannot be separated from late capitalism's obsessive drive for profit. In other words, whether we look for symptoms of the illness in the family structure, in the mass media, in medical discourses that encourage physical transformation, in fitness mania, in the diet industry etc., we would do well to follow the money. Instead of focusing exclusively on the "victims" of eating disorders (formulating what approach should be taken to help them etc.), we need also to question who profits from the proliferation and promotion of eating disorders.

I want, therefore, to draw attention away from the individual cases of anorexia and/or bulimia and the debates for their most effective treatment, and focus instead on how capitalism profits from women's failure to attain their body-ideal. Like the previous chapters

on cosmetic surgery and bodybuilding, in which I move away from a discussion of personal agency and "choice," this chapter concentrates less on individual complicity (be it by men or women), and more on how late capitalism has created an environment in which dieting obsessions and eating disorders appear "normal." Such an analysis involves outlining the move by big business into the food industry (and into the home) and the repercussions of this move for us all. If the present and future of capitalism depend upon mass consumption, why do we not privilege a fat society, a society in which people are encouraged to satisfy, instead of deny, their consuming impulses? How has the culture of slimming, a practice based on denying desires rather than satisfying them, become the popular ideology of the day? If fat people represent unrestrained consumption, why are they not worshipped as the defenders and promoters of advanced capitalism?

Three critical texts that directly address the paradox of how a capitalist economy sustains dieting are Joan Brumberg's *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease*; Hillel Schwartz's *Never Satisfied, A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies and Fat*; and Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. These authors agree that food and diet are the central locus for the expression of this contradiction, and all agree that the dieting industry is "one of the most astounding triumphs of twentieth-century capitalist enterprise" (Brumberg 253). Indeed, dieting is a multi-billion dollar a year industry, and there can be no doubt that enforcing strict dietary regimes on the body encourages eating disorders. The rhetoric of reformation, through both visual and written texts, entices individuals to engage in practices of body modification. A critical analysis of eating disorders focuses first and foremost on interpreting the existing economic structures that profit from encouraging people to develop an alienated relationship with their

bodies. Such an analysis also emphasises, from an historical materialist perspective, that *all* aspects of life are tied into economic systems.

Both Brumberg and Schwartz[7] provide an historical view of how the dieting industry has become a foundation of North American culture. The desire to be slim, Schwartz argues, "must be understood in terms of a confluence of movements in the sciences and in dance, in home economics and political economy, in medical technology and food marketing, in evangelical religion and life insurance" (4). Together, all of these professions (most particularly since the 1960s) supported the anti-fat rhetoric that encourages weight-loss, and they encouraged the belief that excessive "weight reveals something desperately true about the person beneath the pounds" (Schwartz 5). Stigmatized by being labelled lazy and gluttonous, overweight individuals turned to the utopic world that dieting offers, a future world in which happiness promises to accompany slimness (indeed, the economy of dieting--like cosmetic surgery--is also towards completeness). Gradually, then, the link between health and slimness was secured, and obesity or plumpness, once a sign of economic advantage, became, "ironically, symptoms of emptiness, not signs of fullness" (Schwartz 234).

But how does a culture of slimming, which depends on a form of moderation or abstinence, correspond to a capitalist mandate of high consumption? According to Bordo, advanced capitalism produces "an unstable, agonistic" personality that is formed by the "contradictory structure of economic life" (199). She explains:

> On the one hand, as producers of goods and services we must sublimate, delay, repress desires for immediate gratification; we must cultivate the work ethic. On the other hand, as consumers we must display a boundless capacity

> to capitulate to desire and indulge in impulse; we must hunger for constant and immediate satisfaction. The regulation of desire thus becomes an ongoing problem, as we find ourselves continually besieged by temptation, while socially condemned for overindulgence. (199)

The current economic structures, the advertisements that promote a *carpe diem* attitude, the bottom-line profit drives of transnational corporations, all embody the contradiction of late capitalism, "that hedonism and discipline must coexist" (Brumberg 260).

Bulimia, for many women, represents the solution to the conflicting pressures to abstain and to overindulge. Bordo understands bulimia to be a logical, albeit somewhat radical, extension of capitalist pressures to conform and, therefore, to consume--to resist temptation, and to capitulate. She writes,

> bulimia precisely and explicitly expresses the extreme development of the hunger for unrestrained consumption (exhibited in the bulimic's uncontrollable food binges) existing in unstable tension alongside the requirement that we sober up, 'clean up our act,' get back in firm control on Monday morning. (201)

Put another way, bulimia is the physical embodiment of capitalist contradictions.

Bulimia and anorexia mark the terminus points on the dieting continuum. Anorexia represents the entire devotion to thinness, and bulimia stands in as the desire to be both slim and to remain a consumer, a more active agent. Within this continuum is the moderate dieter, who occasionally diets to lose 5-10 pounds, and the chronic dieter, who continuously engages in some weight-loss initiative. The popular belief, increasingly promoted since the turn of the century, that obese individuals eat too much has led contemporary society to

conclude that fat people *choose* obesity and therefore should suffer the consequences. Indeed, much fat discrimination is based on a disgust that obese individuals wilfully consume more than they need. Such discrimination accelerates when the climate promotes a deficit rhetoric that valorizes "downsizing." Getting one's fiscal house in order, this rhetoric implies, starts with the personal body. For fat people to diet, to purchase memberships in weight-loss clinics, to buy lo-calorie drinks and food at the supermarket, is for them to publicly recognize their own misbehaviour. By dieting they enter into the social contract that gives the illusion they will be rewarded. Within a patriarchal system that depends upon the continuance of heterosexual desire, fat women are particularly mistreated; their obesity affirms an interest in satisfying *their own* desires rather than men's desires. Therefore, they "lose" the right to benefit from men's attentions. Simply put, obesity for women carries severe economic penalties.

While obesity for the individual, due to pervasive fat discrimination, is detrimental to personal advancement, a capitalist economy benefits enormously from the increased obese population. One-third of the North American population is "now at least 20 per cent overweight, while millions of others are even heavier, and overall obesity has been on the rise for the past few decades" (Poulton 146). Contrary to popular belief, dieters ***do not*** consume less. Schwartz maintains that dieting profits capitalism precisely because dieters are never permanently successful and, as a result, they "ultimately consume more" (328). In his view,

> The diet is the supreme form for the manipulation of desire precisely because it is so frustrating. Capitalists have as vital a stake in the failures of dieters as

> in the promotion of dieting. It is through the constant frustration of desire that Late Capitalism can prompt ever higher levels of consumption. (328)

Dieters, for instance, continually purchase new wardrobes to accommodate their changing physiques. They purchase the latest weight-loss books, exercise videos and equipment. Fat people "are ideal scapegoats" (329), as they appear unable to use their will-power to keep their so-called rampant appetites in check.[8] In contrast, "Thin people," Schwartz continues, "are capitalism's ideal consumers, for they can devour without seeming gluttonous; they have morality on their side" (329). But as Schwartz makes clear, it is not unrestrained consumption (represented by obesity) that most profits capitalism, but rather the promotion of an *agonized consumption* (represented by the dieter). The diet industry does not profit from a dieter reaching a point of satiety; satiety is capitalism's curse. By fostering and perpetuating a cultural myth that equates obesity with gluttony, the diet industry hosts an ever-increasing number of clients.

Schwartz's study identifies the deceitful practices operating within the diet industry. For instance, despite knowing that dieting has a ninety-eight percent failure rate, diet clinics persist in placing the failure or success of the diet upon the individual. They must perpetuate this lie to stay in business. For, upon closer scrutiny, obesity *does not* truly represent unrestrained consumption--the thin ideal requires a far greater level of consumption. Women who are considered obese may in fact have *dieted their way* to obesity. Indeed, prolonged dieting alters the body's metabolism so drastically that the body eventually stops losing weight, even when consuming as little as five hundred calories a day. Dieters' testimonies often lament how the eventual failure of each diet resulted in a larger weight gain.[9] But what *Never Satisfied* so successfully highlights is that dieting has nothing to do with an individual

achieving self-acceptance; on the contrary, dieting is more about an industry that profits at every turn, seemingly not culpable in perpetuating self-loathing and dissatisfaction.

A counter-discourse to the dieting rhetoric can only emerge by following the money and investigating who or what is profiting from the destructive pursuit of beauty ideals. The diet and food industries have a large stake in perpetuating the dieter's belief in the weight-loss process. Everywhere there are images of successful dieters--in advertising, film, and fashion--and they all perpetuate the myth that maintaining a slim physique is effortless and/or enjoyable. Thus the 98 percent failure rate appears as a failure on the part of the individual, rather than as a rate built into the industry--one that guarantees return customers. Personal failure, coupled with the omnipresent call of the rhetoric of reformation, places the dieter in an almost subservient role to the dieting industry--she needs to be told what to do. With the increasing secularization of North American culture, worshipping the temple of the body has become the modern religion. In *The Hunger Artist*, Ellman states that "Slimming has become the national religion in America, and slenderness the measure of one's moral caliber" (5). Indeed, the intimate relationship between body worship and religious fervour cannot be ignored.

In *Confessing Excess: Women and the Politics of Body Reduction*, Carole Spitzack likens dieting to the confessional model found in the church. The dieter identifies her flaws (flabby thighs, stomach, etc.), confesses her misbehaviour (an indulgence in sweets), and makes a vow to change her character. The goal to lose ten pounds stands in for a moral commitment to improve her flawed nature. She receives her absolutions (three Hail Mary's) from either the diet book or the diet-centre when she is instructed to consume 1000 calories a day, to cut out sweets, and to reduce her fat intake. The confession model also appears in

Femininity and Domination, in which Sandra Lee Bartky pursues the link between the church, and what she calls the "fashion-beauty complex," which is "a vast system of corporations--some of which manufacture products, others services and still others information, images, and ideologies--of emblematic public personages and of sets of techniques and procedures" (39). The church, she argues, "cultivates in its adherents very profound anxieties about the body," and then "presents itself as the only instrument able...to take away the very guilt and shame it has itself produced" (41). The diet industry plays the same role as the church--it encourages participation, chastises failure, and entices its people back, only to put them through the same self-defeating cycle of abuse. While the church advocates that good behaviour will be rewarded in the after-life, the diet industry uses a similar deferral by promising happiness and renewed confidence when the diet is successfully completed. "Every woman who embarks on an attempt to lose weight...must embrace a picture of an afterlife....Images of afterlife characterized by overall spiritual and social health demand a repeated condemnation of a woman's present body and present life" (Spitzack 66). The fantasy of completion promises that a new life will begin once the pounds have been shed, a life filled with the success that accompanies ideal beauty.

The fashion-beauty complex, Bartky argues, has taken over the role of regulating femininity from the church. "As family and church have declined in importance as the central producers and regulators of 'femininity,'" she suggests, "the fashion-beauty complex has grown" (39). Because the images of beauty are not constant (breasts are bound in one decade and enlarged in the next), the fashion-beauty complex continuously places women in a mode of consumption. Dieters are encouraged to continue consuming even as they are abstaining. New clothes accompany a thinner body, and a fitness membership cannot be

allowed to lapse. Moreover, when one diet inevitably fails, another one is there to take its place, which involves new food products, new eating schedules, etc. From an economic perspective, such a linking of body modifications to a future "pay-off" is a stroke of genius, especially since dieting, for many North Americans, has become a chronic condition.

Even though prolonged dieting has been cited as one contributing factor in the rise in eating disorders, some theorists remain baffled by the numbers of women who do *not* suffer from eating disorders. Why, they ask, aren't all women anorexic or bulimic? The three models most used to explain and/or understand anorexia are the psychological model, the biomedical model and the cultural model (Brumberg 25-31). In the psychological model, anorexia is understood as a "crisis of adolescence" (28), a fear of sexuality, etc. The biomedical model looks to biological processes and maintains that "anorexia is generated by an organic cause, what some call somatogenesis" (25). In this view, anorexia becomes an "involuntary disease" (25), something perhaps genetically inherited. The cultural model "postulates that anorexia nervosa is generated by a powerful cultural imperative that makes slimness the chief attribute of female beauty" (31). The latter view avoids casting the disorder as pathological; instead, it seeks to illustrate that such disorders are an inevitable consequence of a misogynistic society and patriarchal capitalism.

Both the physiological and the biomedical model are problematic. The former's reliance on therapy and the latter's dependence on medical technology serve to further implicate the body in institutionalized understandings of behaviour. In other words, both models effectively place the onus of the disease on the individual, with little critique of cultural imperatives. According to Bordo, "the medical model has a deep professional,

economic, and philosophical stake in preserving the integrity of what it has demarcated as its domain, and the result has frequently been blindness to the obvious" (53).

The cultural model is most often critiqued for not addressing how only some women become anorexic or bulimic. Noelle Caskey, for example, in "Interpreting Anorexia Nervosa," asks "Why are there women who do not become anorexic? Given the general (and increasing) social pressure against fat as a kind of moral and economic disgrace, why is *everyone* not anorexic?" (178). Similarly, Brumberg finds fault with the cultural model because it "fail[s] to explain why so many individuals *do not* develop the disease even though they have been exposed to the same cultural environment" (38). For Bordo, however, such critiques against a cultural model are based on a "common misunderstanding (or misrepresentation) of the feminist position as involving the positing of an *identical* cultural situation for all *women* rather than the description of ideological and institutional parameters governing the construction of *gender* in our culture" (61).

All women in North America do not become anorexic because they do not all share the same "ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, genetics, education, family, age, and so forth" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 62). Nor has capitalism been entirely successful in homogenizing individual subjectivity, the population's political views, etc. There remain pockets within communities that resist the "McDonaldization" of society. What women *do* share, however, are homogenizing images and ideals of femininity. Extended exposure to these gender-forming and defining image banks leads to the strict conformity of beauty ideals now in existence. The result of this beauty monopoly is that most women in our culture are "disordered" "when it comes to issues of self-worth, self-entitlement, self-nourishment, and comfort with their own bodies" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 57).

Change in Food Production and the Growth of Fast Foods

It would be easy to isolate a study on the contemporary rise in eating disorders by focusing predominantly on how anorexia and bulimia are women's response to restrictive patriarchal conventions, as well as how the mass-production of homogenized images of female beauty has encouraged women to shape their bodies like those in magazines, film and television. While there can be little doubt that the culture industry, through its representation of ideal beauty, promotes a homogenized ideal, what remains overlooked in such studies is an investigation of how the food industry has been revolutionized since World War II and especially since the 1960s. Only in the last few decades has food, as a form of entertainment or leisure, increased in popularity as a commodity; Brumberg is one critic who recognizes the significance of such a revolutionizing transformation. Accordingly, she concludes her study of anorexia with a discussion of how the food industry has grown and changed.

Not only how and what we eat has changed, she argues, but also how we think about eating (259). Brumberg makes the compelling argument that eating has become desocialized; this process began "in the postwar period with the introduction of convenience foods and drive-in restaurants, precursors of the fast-food chains that now constitute a $45-billion-a-year industry" (261). Furthering Brumberg's concerns about the changing nature of our relationship with food, Ester Reiter's *Making Fast Food: From the Frying Pan into the Fryer*[10] provides an excellent introduction into the fast food phenomenon. According to Reiter, the fast food industry's success has stemmed from bringing business into the family structure. "The linkages between family, community, and industry," she suggests, "have been used by large fast food companies to their advantage" (169). "Millions of dollars are spent to convince consumers of the relationship between fast food restaurants and charitable,

community-minded endeavours" (170). However, she insists, successful as these advertising campaigns are, they mask that the "incursion of corporate capitalism into the home has occurred in a way that enhances profits, rather than benefits the consumer" (19).

The fast food industry makes itself highly visible through its vast advertising campaigns. Franchising enables the large fast food chains to spend millions of dollars in advertising a year. "Where one small store is limited in the amount of advertising it can afford, systemwide promotional campaigns can have great persuasive power" (Reiter 52). McDonald's launched its first national advertising campaign in 1967. Prior to this, it had advertised only on a local level. But in 1967 it spent "$5 million" in advertising. "Two years later the ad budget had grown to nearly $15 million. By 1973 it was $50 million, and a year later it was estimated as a $60 million massive campaign that drowns competitors by sheer, overpowering weight" (Boas and Chain 122-23). According to Reiter's calculations, by 1987, "Half a billion dollars was spent by McDonald's and Burger King...just in television advertising" (48).

Since opening its first outlet in 1955, the degree to which McDonald's has become synonymous with North American tradition and family values is disconcerting. Reiter contends that "Marketplace entry into food preparation and consumption has had the effect of moving food preparation out of the home and into the factory" (14). Future predictions suggest that consumers will be cooking even less. Despite the fact that McDonald's has come under continued criticism since the 1970s (from labour unions, environmentalists, etc.), its sales continue to be strong in North America, and its expansion into other parts of the world appears unstoppable.

In *The McDonaldization of Society*, Ritzer explains the factors that have made the McDonald's model so irresistible: efficiency, purported value, predictability, and control (9-10). By bringing the assembly line into food production, McDonald's has greater control over both its workers and its customers. Workers perform their tasks as instructed, with no deviation, and customers also perform *their* role with no deviation. Why employ extra staff if you can persuade customers to order their own food, and then to clean up after themselves?[11]

The diet industry (which encompasses diet books, diet foods, diet drinks, diet pills, diet clinics, "fat farms," exercise videos and more) has followed close on the heels of McDonald's fast food model of easy calculability and high-profits. *The McDonaldization of Society* makes a strong link between the calculability in the fast food industry (how much is sold, how much is wasted, etc.), and the manic accountability promoted by the diet industry (how many calories consumed, how much weight lost/gained). According to Ritzer,

> Given its very nature, the diet industry is obsessed with things that can be quantified. Weight, weight loss (or gain), and time periods are measured precisely. Food intake is carefully measured and monitored. The packages of diet foods carefully detail the number of ounces of food, the number of calories, and many other things as well. (67)

The diet industry has also emulated the fast food model of efficiency, purported value, predictability, and control.

Dieting is big business. The total annual spending in North America on weight-loss programs, products and services is more than $40 billion dollars (Poulton 78). According to Schwartz's calculations, "diet food and diet beverage sales in 1984 were advancing at triple the pace of all other foods and drinks, with a market of $41 billion projected for 1990"

(245).[12] Equally high is the money spent advertising for weight-loss products and programs. Like the fast food industry that gathers its advertising resources from franchising, weight-loss clinics have resorted to franchising in order to guarantee increasing profits and to fund a large advertising budget. By 1967, Weight Watchers already had twenty-three franchises in the U.S., "had enrolled nearly 500,000 members," and had "spawned several imitators" (Poulton 61). In January of 1994 (the post-holidays are the best months for the diet industry), $50 million was spent on "TV, print, and radio advertising for weight-loss products" (Poulton 84). Purchasing such a large amount of advertising space ensures that dieting rhetoric reaches everyone, in one form or another.

Like the steady assault of the fast food business, the diet industry has methodically implanted itself as a sibling North American institution. While the fatty foods at McDonald's and other fast food chains "virtually *manufacture* future customers for the anti-fat conglomerate" (Poulton 66), the diet industry plays the role of a conscientious citizen, comfortingly there to "take over." Eating habits that have been guided since youth, are now "treated" in weight-loss clinics. It is no coincidence that the fast food industry gears most of its advertising to children, for the industry knows to catch them young is potentially to have them for life. (In the hopes that you are never too young to have a "Mac Attack," McDonald's has now "entered the womb." A 30-second commercial recently ran on US Spanish-speaking television stations, showing a fetus tugging on an umbilical cord to encourage his mother to eat at McDonald's [*Adbusters* 18]). Reiter's study reveals that "children have the biggest influence on where their parents take the family at dinnertime" (65). McDonald's appeals directly to children by providing a playland at every location, and by offering staff participation in birthday celebrations. In addition, McDonald's more recent

advertising partnership with Disney is meant to guarantee another generation of loyal customers.

The extremes in physical bodies--from anorexia on one side, and bulimia and obesity on the other--are mirrored in contemporary culture by the joint industries of fast food and dieting. Terry Poulton's *No Fat Chicks* exposes how the two industries "feed" one another. Her extensive research into what she calls the "billion-dollar brainwash" makes it difficult to dispute this symbiotic coupling. Weight Watchers, for example, since 1980, has been owned by the H.J. Heinz Company. When Heinz assumed control of the weight-loss clinics, to increase profits it began producing its own food line for dieters. Accordingly, "the once-humble support group has been transformed into a virtual supermarket of more than 250 food products bearing the WW [Weight Watchers] label" (Poulton 86). The price of this "convenience" food for dieters can be upwards of $70 per week. Heinz's already strong association with grocery stores virtually guaranteed Weight Watchers' food to be widely distributed to most supermarkets.

Following Heinz's example, Nestlé corporation was not to be left out of the high dieting profits; it is the producer of Ultra Slim Fast (Poulton 87). Indeed, the degree to which the preparation of diet foods has become fast food is worth noting.

> For example, Nutri/System boasts that most of its freeze-dried entrees 'can be ready in under 5 minutes. So you don't have to spend a lot of time in the kitchen.' But in its endless search to further reduce the amount of time devoted to food preparation, Nutri/System is now offering 'an increasing

number of microwavable entrees that can be on your plate, ready to eat, 90 seconds after you take them from your cupboard.'" (Ritzer 67-68)

The McDonaldization of cooking is clearly evident in this example: the assembly line moves into the private realm of the home, bringing with it the fast food ideals of efficiency, predictability, and control. The new model of the perfectly managed self is one in which "food refusal, weight loss, commitment to exercise, and [the] ability to tolerate bodily pain and exhaustion have become cultural metaphors for self-determination, will, and moral fortitude" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 168). But food refusal sets up the compensatory binge as a virtual inevitability.

The medical profession also promotes the McDonaldization of quick-fixes by prescribing a variety of fat-losing methods to its patients. In her article "Fat Oppression," Beth MacInnis argues that "the medical community has played a significant role in perpetuating, if not shaping, pervasive fat-oppressive attitudes" (70). Doctors who specialize in weight-loss surgery perform intestinal bypasses, stomach stapling, and jaw wiring. The intestinal bypass "involves removing most of the small intestine so that the stomach is linked almost directly to the anus" (MacInnis 72). Similarly, gastric stapling involves "implanting surgical staples in the stomach to radically reduce its capacity to hold food, setting an upper limit of 3 to 10 ounces" (MacInnis 73). Both operations have long-term side-effects, and deaths from the surgeries have been reported.[13]

The recent craze surrounding Redux marks the largest anti-fat campaign in years, and clearly indicates the existence of a war against obesity. Sales from Redux, the first weight-loss pill to be approved by the FDA since 1973,[14] are projected to be $8 billion annually (Poulton 101). Again, this war is predicated upon the belief that fat people *choose* to

overindulge. But if, as the feminist fat liberation movement has lobbied, this same argument of choice were applied to other marginalized groups, the oppression would be immediately recognized. For example, imagine a public cry for joy that a pill could turn a homosexual into a heterosexual, or that a pill could change black skin to white skin. Imagine if remaining gay or black were then perceived as a foolhardy *choice*. Fat people are one of the only remaining groups that can be oppressed and discriminated against *for their own good.*

The promotion of Redux is yet another example of how the medical profession engages in abusive treatment of fat people. Such a coercion of professional power for personal gains led Judy Freespirit and Aldebaran, in "The Fat Liberation Manifesto" (1973),[13] to cite the medical profession as "enemies" of fat people. Number five on their list of demands states:

> WE single out as our special enemies the so-called "reducing" industries. These include diet clubs, reducing salons, fat farms, diet doctors, diet books, diet foods and food supplements, surgical procedures, appetite suppressants, drugs and gadgetry such as wraps and "reducing machines."
>
> WE demand that they take responsibility for their false claims, acknowledge that their products are harmful to the public health, and publish long-term studies proving any statistical efficacy of their products. ***We make this demand knowing that over 99% of all weight-loss programs, when evaluated over a five-year period, fail utterly, and also knowing the extreme, proven harmfulness of repeated large changes in weight.*** (52)

The Manifesto fell on deaf ears. Contemporary excitement over Redux confirms the medical communities' continued assault on fat.

The Fat Body

Shadow on a Tightrope (essays in which women recount numerous examples of fat oppression), poignantly addresses the degree to which overweight people are discriminated against in North America. A number of contemporary literary works also depict the severity of fat oppression in our culture, and highlight the psychic anguish the obese individual experiences when she is taunted or abused.

Ella Mae, the protagonist of Leon Rooke's novel, *Fat Woman*, is a binge-eater entirely preoccupied with planning her next meal. Fat as a child, she suffered the indignities and humiliations that accompany being obese in a culture that polices bodies by promoting fat oppression. At school the kids called her "Fatso. Blimp. Lardo. How's the weather, they'd say, in that balloon?" (68). Since marrying her husband Edward twenty years ago, she has gained weight steadily. The extra weight has not gone unnoticed by her family and neighbours, but the grotesque swelling in her hand from her now too-small wedding band finally forces a confrontation with her excessive eating habits. "The flesh was way up over the wedding band," we are told, "sometimes so bad you could hardly see it, and the skin had a purplish tone" (27). Ella Mae refuses to have the ring cut off, fearing the doctors will have to take her arm with it. So she endures the agony of its continual throbbing, and lies to Edward about the pain.

The novel opens with Ella Mae returning from grocery shopping to find Edward nailing wooden boards over her bedroom window. His intentions remain a mystery until the novel's end, when we learn he plans to imprison Ella Mae in her bedroom as a forced weight-loss measure. "Nothing else has worked, Ella Mae," he confesses,

> You have gone on getting bigger and bigger, a trial to yourself and us. All I mean to do is whittle you down, get you back to fighting size....I am only doing it for your own good....I'm putting in at daybreak a little cat door so I can slide in enough food to keep you going....You'll live Ella Mae. You'll thank me for it one day. (173-74)

With both compassion and alarm, we read of Edward's decision to forcibly impose a diet on Ella Mae. How long, we wonder, will he keep her a prisoner? How much weight will she have to lose before he sets her free?

Edward's plan to imprison his wife may be more humane than subjecting her to the vast array of surgeries offered by the medical profession, surgeries that treat obesity as a disease. Stomach-stapling, intestinal bypasses, and wiring the jaw shut to enforce liquid diets are not acts of kindness, despite the "for your own good" disclaimer, nor is the relocation of an obese person to a "fat farm" or "resort" in which her actions are under twenty-four hour surveillance.[16] However, examples of "successful" dieters are everywhere used to shame the overweight into following similar weight-loss measures. For instance, lurking in the background of Ella Mae's story, and offered as a foil to her, is Bette Wiffle--the successful dieter advertising Weightlosers Anonymous in one of Ella Mae's magazines. Her "before" and "after" photograph, and the accompanying slogans, reveal that she "had dropped from a size 42 to a size 16 in six short weeks without exercising or dieting and she was having the time of her life in Antigonish, Nova Scotia" (22). Tapping his finger on the advertisement, Edward states, "Goes to show you, Ella Mae...it can be done" (22).

The fantastical ad for Weightlosers Anonymous demonstrates how persuasive the dieting rhetoric can be. Bette Wiffle, "without exercising or dieting," has miraculously

dropped to a significantly smaller dress size "in six short weeks." That this ad appears in a woman's magazine is no surprise. As Rita Freedman contends in *Beauty Bound*, "since the turn of the century, women's magazines have featured 'before and after' shots. The testimonials of ordinary housewives prove that nature needs only a gentle prod" (63). Indeed, Edward's "it can be done" really means "if she can do it, you can too!" This "you can too" motto successfully flattens individual experience, body metabolism, age, etc., and places the emphasis of success or failure onto the individual. Edward's comment, "I am only doing it for your own good" (173), and "You'll thank me for it one day" (174), reflects the general attitude embodied in weight-loss propaganda--that to be fat means you are unhappy, and that to diet and lose weight will make you feel better about yourself. There is no in-between. His comment also illustrates, as I mentioned earlier, that fat people are one of the only remaining groups that can be oppressed and discriminated against *for their own good.*

Ella Mae eats to punish herself and to repress the deep anger that rages inside her. Her children's taunts are unbearable, and Edward's teasing about her weight feels "like...a buzz saw tear[ing] at her insides" (13). In short, she feels "lonely...abused...violated and practically condemned" (41), so she eats, and often too much, as the following passage indicates:

> She was looking down into her own raw insides, into the giant trough which serves as the stomach of a creature whose only pleasure is to eat. Rank fumes drifted up in waves thick and thin as if from a seething pool of rot and filth. She could discern small boiling pockets, eruptions. The fumes momentarily parted. Down there to the left lay a bed of cabbage, leaves scarcely chewed, bacon strips still intact. Potatoes had rolled every which way. Unidentifiable

> meats churned in a slick puddle at the centre; there were the beans, and corn, and biscuits marked where her teeth had bitten into them. The odd bone or cut of fat shot up above the surface and was instantly snatched down again. Pockets of sugar, inert, lay all around. Ringing her stomach lining was a doughy yellowy mass recognizably the cookies she had eaten today. Small rivers of grease formed, then vanished, to appear a second later elsewhere. The entire putrid mass churned at slow boil, a maggot's face. Revolting. How could a child of God pile in so much? (94)

This is where her "Stomach Serpent" (95) lives, the monster that commands her to eat. From here comes the undying hunger that she always tries, but fails, to satisfy. The putrid mass of boiling food exemplifies Ella Mae's repeated attempts to comfort herself, to stop the loneliness, to make herself feel that she belongs. She knows there will be "olympic athletes in heaven," those bodies representing control, but she is not so sure there will be fat people (143). Food is Ella Mae's only friend, and she eats to ease a profound hunger that can only be described as loneliness.

Like Ella Mae, Esther Sussman, the protagonist of Fay Weldon's first novel, *The Fat Woman's Joke*, has been married for twenty years. Her comfortable existence as a housewife disintegrates over a two week period when she and her husband, Alan, decide to diet. Esther reports to a friend: "'Alan and I were accustomed to eating a great deal, of course. We all have our cushions against reality: we all have to have our little treats to look forward to....and with Alan and me it was eating food. So you can imagine how vulnerable a diet made us'" (18). Indeed, the dieting disturbs their lives so much that Esther decides in favour of living

alone and "controlling" the quantity of food she eats. This is where we find Esther when the novel opens, living in a small flat where "she ate, and ate, and drank, and ate" (9).

Weldon's novel virtually overflows with lists of food that have been or will be eaten. Safely secluded in her apartment, Esther "ate frozen chips and peas and hamburgers, and sliced bread with bought jam and fishpaste, and baked beans and instant puddings, and tinned porridge and tinned suet pudding, and cakes and biscuits from packets" (9). None of her binge-foods are home-made; they are either instant, or already prepared. Such foods are often marketed for the single or working person, and, for Esther, they mark a departure from the family dinners she once so lovingly prepared. When her friend, Phyllis, drops by to persuade Esther to return to her husband, Esther replies: "This is my home now....I can control everything, and I can eat. I like eating" (11). Esther's emphasis on control is important. Living alone enables her to binge-eat at will, without having to hide the evidence of how much food she has consumed (as Ella Mae does).

However, like Ella Mae, she acknowledges that physical hunger has little to do with her overconsumption of food. Responding to Phyllis' comment that she cannot possibly be hungry, Esther retorts, "'It has nothing to do with hunger for God's sake'" (53). Esther uses food to repress her feelings of loneliness and to appease her dissatisfaction with the direction her life has taken. She states: "'I feel hungry. I am all stirred up inside. I feel the way I did when I was eighteen. I don't know what I want but it's not this. I don't want to be this person, I don't want to be trapped in this body, in this house, in this marriage'" (73). Food becomes Esther's coping device to deal with the void she feels in her traditional role as wife and mother.

Food temporarily assuages Esther's feelings of hopelessness, but ultimately her body, like Ella Mae's, revolts against the very thing that once comforted.

> Esther was very sick at about four in the morning. A great mass of undigested food poured back out of her mouth into the lavatory basin: she could taste the different flavours as it passed. The soup, the toast, the curry, the cake, the nuts, the eggs, the fish fingers, the butter, the jam, the beans, the cake--the whole evening's intake reappeared in a spasmic flow. She had not realized that her stomach could contain so much. (83)

The expulsion of the night's binge synecdochally represents Esther's conflicting emotional torment. Her body's refusal to absorb this offending mixture of food further symbolises that Esther can no longer "stomach" her restrictive role as Alan's wife and Peter's mother.

Nor can she "stomach" the homogenous beauty ideals for women. As the epitome of femininity, Phyllis operates as Esther's foil: "[T]hirty-one and finely boned,...neat, sexy and rich," she is also "invincibly lively and invincibly stupid" (10). When Esther discovers that Phyllis has had her breasts surgically lifted, she berates her for buying into the myth of women's beauty:

> I suppose you really do believe that your happiness is consequent upon your size? That an inch or two one way or the other would make you truly loved? Equating prettiness with sexuality, and sexuality with happiness? It is a very debased view of femininity you take, Phyllis. It would be excusable in a sixteen-year old--if my nose were a different shape, if my bosom were larger, if my freckles were gone, then the whole world would be different. But in a woman of your age it is vulgar. (11-12)

Interestingly, Esther recognizes the "vulgarities" of rigid beauty ideals, and calls for their expansion into more "realistic" representations of women. Her condemnation of Phyllis' obsessive somatic fixations draws attention to how exclusionary the requirements for femininity are, and highlights the need for a broader definition of beauty that would include women of her size.

There is little difference between the "stomach serpent" that forces Ella Mae to binge, and the profound sense of despair that encourages Esther to overeat until her body rebels. In both cases, the protagonists have images of "proper" femininity to draw attention to their own failures. Betty Wiffle "proves" that dieting does work, and advertises a weight-loss program; Phyllis maintains a slim and youthful figure, and thereby advertises the services of cosmetic surgery. Clinics and surgeons--these are just two of the products that are offered to Ella Mae and Esther.

Joan Foster, the protagonist of Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*, is introduced to an entire array of dieting products when she finally decides to lose weight. Her first exposure to fat-discrimination comes when, as a chubby seven-year-old, her teacher demotes her from the role of butterfly in the school play, and forces her instead to play a mothball. Reflecting on this traumatic incident years later, Joan imagines finding a sympathetic listener: "if I described myself as charming and skinny, they would find the whole thing pathetic and unfair" (48). Indeed, the only reason the teacher "demotes" her is because of her size.

By the time she is thirteen, Joan stands five feet four, weighs one hundred and eighty-two pounds, and has turned her body into a weapon of rebellion against her controlling mother. Two years later, to her mother's horror, Joan stands five feet eight and weighs two hundred and forty-five pounds. Mrs. Foster repeatedly attempts to force her

daughter to lose weight, but Joan refuses both the amphetamines and the endless diets foisted upon her (80-81). The extent to which the medical profession colludes with Mrs. Foster is evident when Joan visits a psychiatrist who asks the obese teenager: "Don't you want to get married?" (81). As Spitzack argues in *Confessing Excess*, the weight-loss industry is supported by "dating and marriage customs, among others," (such as "mass media, fashion and cosmetic industries") (21). Here the doctor uses the threat of spinsterhood (even though Joan is only fifteen years old) to encourage conformity.

But Joan remains as determined to gain weight as Mrs. Foster is determined to have Joan lose it. In an act of cruelty similar to Edward's imprisoning his wife to force weight-loss, Mrs. Foster enters a "laxative phase" (84) and "ice[s] a chocolate cake with melted Ex-Lax, leaving it on the kitchen counter" where Joan finds and devours it (85). Although the Ex-Lax makes her sick, it does not stop her from eating. Throughout Mrs. Foster's many attempts to entice her daughter to lose weight (pills, diets, therapy, a clothing allowance), she never views Joan's staying fat as an option.

The anti-fat rhetoric operates on all levels in *Lady Oracle*. Even Joan's fat Aunt Lou, the one person who seems to accept Joan just as she is, stipulates in her will that Joan must lose one hundred pounds to receive her inheritance. Initially hurt, Joan determines to lose the weight and to gain some semblance of economic freedom. That night, while laying in bed, she sneaks a peak at her body and describes her thigh as follows:

> It was enormous, it was gross, it was like a diseased limb, the kind you see in pictures of jungle natives; it spread on forever, like a prairie photographed from a plane, the flesh not green but bluish-white, with veins meandering across it like rivers. It was the size of three ordinary thighs. I thought, That is

> really my thigh. It really is, and then I thought, This can't possibly go on. (121)

Joan's use of words such as "gross" and "diseased" to describe her "fat" thigh illustrates the degree to which the wealth of anti-fat rhetoric is absorbed by women. The word "ordinary" is the most telling, for "Large women have been just as brainwashed as everyone else into denigrating any manifestation of 'ordinary' or 'normal' that doesn't match the media's standard" (Poulton 170). Joan's moment of clarity involves a recognition of how much her body deviates from societal standards. More interesting, however, than descriptions of her obese body, are the methods she uses to lose weight.

Joan begins her diet by taking her mother's quick-fix remedies all at once: "a couple of fat pills in the morning, a dose of laxatives, half a box of Ayds, a little RyKrisp and black coffee, [and] a waddle around the block for exercise" (121). In so doing, Joan supports the weight-loss industry in two ways: economically, by purchasing and consuming its numerous products, and psychically, by believing that these products will produce results. She does not, however, anticipate the side-effects: "blinding headaches, stomach cramps, accelerated heartbeat from the fat pills, and an alarming clarity of vision" (121). These side-effects are compounded by frequent and overwhelming desires to binge:

> I suffered from fits of weakness and from alarming, compulsive relapses during which I would eat steadily, in a kind of trance, anything and everything in sight--I recall with horror consuming nine orders of fried chicken in a row--until my shrunken and abused stomach would protest and I would throw up. (121)

Joan's desperate weight-loss program, far from being outlandish and bizarre, could be used as a case study on eating disorders. Most poignant about the above quotation is how the dieting body responds to prolonged deprivation of food by shifting into a self-preservation mode that triggers repeated binging sessions.

Joan's all-or-nothing diet is indicative of a quick-fix society that promises (demands) fast results. Drastic and potentially life-threatening dietary practices are encouraged not only by advertisers promoting their own goods, but also by the medical profession. Bette Wiffle's miraculous 6 week reduction plan in the *Fat Woman* illustrates what people increasingly *believe* to be possible--that no dieting, no exercise, and little effort by the dieter can produce instant results. That Ella Mae's husband looks to Bette Wiffle as a sign of hope for his own wife's potential weight-loss is telling. But Joan's erratic and compulsive dieting is much more realistic than Bette Wiffle's effortless, yet successful, weight-loss. By listing the many side-effects Joan suffers, Atwood provides a counter-discourse to the dieting rhetoric.

Joan loses the weight her Aunt Lou designated in her will, and she receives her inheritance. But what makes Joan's character so interesting is her unwavering identification with her former, obese self. Once she leaves home, she tries to construct an entirely new past. For her, "Losing weight is like being reborn" (Fee 39). "I was a different person," Joan confesses, "and it was like being born fully grown at the age of nineteen: I was the right shape, but I had the wrong past" (141). Losing weight and having a "new" body literally distances Joan from her past, a past filled with the embarrassment and pain that stems from living in a culture that discriminates against the obese.

Although the three novels provide compassionate portraits of women who struggle with food and their bodies, they also, in part, perpetuate the very fat discrimination they

attempt to expose. Readers are not meant to sympathise with the obese Ella Mae, Esther, and Joan; instead, readers secretly urge them on to diet, hoping they lose weight *for their own good*. Dieting, even with its side-effects, still looks better than the binges, the vomiting, and the general dissatisfaction with the self. In the end, the counter-discourse does not clearly overcome the strong cultural prejudice against obesity. There is no equivalent term to describe obesity that rivals the positive connotations embodied in phrases such as "lean and mean."

To be overweight is, literally, to step out of the production line. The link between thin bodies and an efficient capitalist economy is further pursued in *Never Satisfied*, where Schwartz argues that "The culture of slimming collaborates with capitalism to adapt the body shapes of workers to machines that cannot abide loose flesh or imbalanced forms. The streamlining of the workplace demands a streamlining of the human body, whether by diet or by drug" (328). He goes on to list the many impediments "overweight" people face daily: "Airplane seats, subway turnstiles, steering wheels in cars are designed to make fat people uncomfortable. People in motion in the modern world should be as streamlined as their vehicles" (328). To become a labouring body, a useful and socially productive body, often involves entering into other capitalist enterprises such as the beauty, diet and fitness industries.

The emphasis on "streamlining" production in the workplace has provided corporations with the opportunity to push "health" incentives onto their employees. In 1990, for example, U-Haul International began enforcing a weight watch on its workers *and their families*. Under the guise of their new "wellness" program, "Some 13,500 employees were

required to sign statements swearing that they, and their spouses, would either comply with the company's so-called wellness weight level or consent to a salary reduction" (Poulton 146). Critics of the plan immediately recognized that this "charitable capitalism" would save U-Haul "$250,000 [from] the company's annual salary expenses" (Poulton 146). Employees and/or their families who "deviate" from this "wellness" plan are virtually being forced into the hands of the diet and fitness industries. The implications of this corporate intrusion into the home are vast. On a purely economic level, this "wellness" plan will effect the benefits employees and their families receive (no longer a "right," they will be determined according to the family's commitment to "health"), and it will impinge on the family's leisure time (or non-paid hours).

Despite the potential boon in revenues if more corporations adopt a wellness plan, Weight Watchers is not content to wait for employees of U-Haul or other companies to buy memberships. Instead, it is actively seeking an affiliation with insurance companies to "inundate its millions of members with rebate offers on life insurance premiums" (Poulton 228-29). And so the great Catch-22 is exposed: the increased consumption of fast food and convenience foods, high in fat and sugar content, has pushed the average person into the overweight category on weight charts. Despite the known failure rates of diets, and despite the growing proof that drastically reducing calorie-intake *contributes* to weight-gain, dieting is still promoted as the solution to obesity, and our "psyches and libidos are virtually *owned* by the big-bucks industries of diet, fitness, fashion, beauty products, and cosmetic surgery" (Poulton 166).

Men and Eating Disorders

Eating disorders still primarily affect women, but the numbers of men exhibiting similar symptoms is growing. As Peggy Claude-Pierre argues in *The Secret Language of Eating Disorders*, "many men and boys suffer even more [than women] because they feel they are an almost freakish minority and because the sensitive natures that predisposed them to the eating disorder...make them lifelong targets for social embarrassment" (xii-xiii). A recent collection of essays edited by Arnold E. Andersen, *Males with Eating Disorders*, attests to this phenomenon. As I outline in my chapter on bodybuilding, men's obsessions with their bodies have generally been focused on shape rather than weight. Angela D. Mickalide supports this finding in her article "Sociocultural Factors Influencing Weight Among Males." In a section devoted to media analysis, she contends that men are portrayed more as concerned with their physical fitness, while women are seen as obsessed with their weight. A comparison of men's and women's magazines disclosed "that magazines targeted primarily to women included a greater number of articles and advertisements aimed at weight reduction (e.g., diet, calories), and those targeted at men contained more shape articles and advertisements (e.g., fitness, weight lifting, body building, or muscle toning)" (Mickalide 31). But the muscular and developed male ideal is as difficult to attain (and maintain) as the current female ideal of beauty. Disordered relationships with the body are a natural outcome of this continual struggle with biological impediments.

While the number of males with eating disorders remains small in comparison to the number of females, it is on the rise. As capitalism benefits increasingly from men's fixations on their bodies, more pressure is exerted to encourage them to increase their consumption levels. Samuel Fussell's *Muscle: Confessions of an Unlikely Bodybuilder* is a prime example

of how men's pursuits of bodily perfection in the world of bodybuilding turn them into high consumers of body products. *Muscle* illustrates how an obsession with body perfection can lead to the onset of eating disorders. Similarly, in *Male Impersonators*, Mark Simpson describes the condition that professional bodybuilders suffer from as a type of reverse anorexia wherein the bodybuilder "look[s] in the mirror and see[s] himself as chronically deficient in manliness" (34). Whereas the anorexic is never thin enough, the bodybuilder is never *big* enough.

There are a number of scenes in Fussell's autobiography that confirm how the male bodybuilders' eating habits have become disordered. The Portuguese Rambo, one of the gym regulars, boasts: "I vomit the most. That's why my legs are the best" (44). Vinnie, another regular, "could be heard throwing up every afternoon from an excess of food even his body couldn't take" (132). Fussell often staggers outside or to the bathroom to vomit his large meals (64, 111-12), but eating to excess occupies only half of the bodybuilding process; the other half involves fasting. Before a competition, in order to minimize water retention and to burn away all fat content, bodybuilders follow a strict diet. The obsessive extent to which every calorie is accounted for appears in Fussell's journal entry. He writes: "I hadn't used my Crest for the last six weeks. It was off-limits. The sodium content was simply too high" (223). Fussell engages in this minute policing of his body and in unremitting efforts to control its shape in order to "win" a bodybuilding competition. He has no political goal, does not represent a collective (as Hunger-Strikers generally do), and wants only to satisfy his own desires. Like the anorexic, the drastic and severe manipulations of his body have become his career.[17]

Conclusion

Although capitalism encourages people to consume beyond their "needs," we do not live in a fat society, one that rewards the physical *representation* of uncontrolled consumption. The abundance of choices offered by capitalism and the instant gratification that credit allows presents its own unique difficulties. As Brumberg argues, "capitalism seems to generate a peculiar set of human difficulties that might well be characterized as consumption disorders rather than strictly eating disorders" (270).

Mary Winkler takes this one step further and claims that these "consumption disorders," or issues of self-control, may be the cause of many contemporary medical problems. "Eating disorders, addictions of all kinds, the tendency to label any number of practices as addicting, the recent exercise mania, food fads, cosmetic surgery--all merge into practices of, or obsessions with, self-control" (233-234). The common denominator in these addictions is a "strain of depression" that can be located in "fashion magazines and self-help literature" (Winkler 237). The constant assault on the body (trim this, fix that) and the time spent trying to "control" it, masks a very deep societal despair. But as Bordo argues, "eating disorders...are utterly continuous with a dominant element of the experience of being female in this culture" (*Unbearable* 57). Indeed, "Virtually every proposed hallmark of 'underlying psychopathology' in eating disorders has been deconstructed to reveal a more widespread *cultural* disorder" (*Unbearable* 55). Hence instead of focusing on individual cases of women who suffer from eating disorders, and analyzing what factors contributed to their state, our focus is better directed to exposing how the rhetoric of wellness and happiness promoted by the dieting industry is simply a way for large corporations to secure profits.

To recognize the connections between the dieting industry, big business, and the medical profession is to understand that eating disorders are profitable to, and encouraged by, a capitalist economy that encourages consumers to develop an agonized relationship with their bodies, and in turn profits from the very body insecurities it has fostered. Teresa Ebert's call for a politics of transformation, for a "radical social transformation" (3), begins with the recognition of the relationship between capitalism and the exploitative systems of power that keep certain groups oppressed. Why, she asks, when capitalism relies on the exploitation of women's labour, does ludic feminism take the performative body instead of the *labouring* body as its central concern (ix)? I ask a similar question: Why, when three-quarters of North American women feel themselves to be overweight, and when millions are engaged in some form of diet that will ultimately fail, are more feminists not working to actively expose the various misconducts of the dieting industry? The vast amount of unpaid labour that is extracted from workers involved in beauty pursuits needs further exposure.

One way to expose this exploitation is to actively encourage a counter-discourse to the rhetoric of reformation. However, the access to advertising funds that franchising makes available to the diet and fast food industry renders it increasingly difficult for such counter-discourses to have any kind of exposure. With few exceptions, heroes and heroines in the visual and print media are slim and attractive. But a growing body of literature is addressing the damaging cultural fixation with bodily perfection by recognizing that such obsessions proliferate within a capitalist economy. The poetry, fiction and autobiography I have analysed provide this counter-discourse by reflecting the profoundly negative aspects of living in a culture that promotes a narrow and homogenized ideal of beauty. The straight refusal to recognize that all efforts to diet involve unpaid labour is yet another mystification

of the culture industry. Such mystification obfuscates the real exploitation of individuals. By keeping the unpaid labour invisible, the beauty, diet, and fitness industries ensure repeat customers.

Yet it is important to remember that even the examples of a counter-discourse cannot be exempted from the capitalist market in which they are produced. Literature is produced by the publishing industry, which also makes large profits from cook books and diet books (hedonism and discipline). *The Beverly Hills Diet*, for example, has been described as "the first time an eating disorder--anorexia nervosa--has been marketed as a cure for obesity" (Wooley 57). The book offers "a form of direct training in anorexic behaviours and attitudes which should be of great concern" (Wooley 57). Despite the alarming health concerns such a diet creates, a publisher has profited by mass marketing anorexia nervosa.

Perhaps a similar danger exists with representing eating disorders in literature, for the portrayals can adversely provide instructions for readers/viewers interested in controlling their weight. In a discussion of Hilde Bruch's work on eating disorders, Maud Ellman notes that many of Bruch's patients claimed to have learned "how to purge or starve from the innumerable books and television programs on bulimia and anorexia" (24). These sources were intended to be counter-discourses to educate their audiences about the *dangers* of such behaviours, not to encourage them to adopt them. So while I argue that my literary examples successfully illustrate the psychic pain that accompanies attempts to transform the body, I must also acknowledge that they potentially reinscribe existing and destructive body obsessions.

Notes

1. "Ellen West" is the fictitious name used to protect the anonymity of the patient's family.

2. Mervyn Nicholson also refers to Marian McAlpin as an anorexic in his article "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others." Like Cameron, he reaches this conclusion because Marian "ceases referring to herself as I and becomes objective to herself--a loss of personal identity consistent with anorexia" (40).

3. For a more detailed outline of the appearance of bulimia in medical textbooks in the 18th and 19th Century see Stein and Laakso 206-207.

4. For examples of how feasts (food and appetite) were necessary for the world of carnival, see Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World.*

5. It must be noted, however, that other genres preceding the rise of the novel were also able to focus on the detail of characters. The four humours, for example, the medieval typology of human temperament, categorized people's characters as sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric or melancholic. As well, details from phrenology, the belief that the configurations of the human skull indicated the degree of development of various mental faculties and characteristics, were used liberally to describe individual characters. Rogers' claim that the novel drew special attention to body types is a generalization. However, her essay is most useful in its particular focus on the rise of weight-watching as a particularly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century preoccupation.

6. See Juliet McMaster's *Dickens the Designer* for a discussion of Dickensian physiology.

7. I rely heavily on Schwartz's text, because it is, to date, the only book published that provides an historical investigation into the diet industry in North America.

8. For a literary example of how fat people are scapegoats, see the title story in Peter Carey's collection *The Fat Man in History*.

9. See *Shadow on a Tightrope* for a number of personal essays describing how excessive dieting led to increased weight gain.

10. Although Reiter's study focuses more on the operations of Burger King (McDonald's refused her request to study their workplace), I use McDonald's as a "generic" example primarily because of its popularity. However, other companies such as Pepsico--"the largest food conglomerate in the world with its ownership of Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Taco Bell" (Reiter 55)--are implicated as well.

11. The PLEASE that was once painted on McDonald's garbage containers, encouraging customers to be polite and clean up after themselves, has been replaced with a THANK YOU. This suggests that customers have become so well-trained that no encouragement or plea is necessary--the cleanup is already being done.

12. The irony implicit in "lite" food and drink is that they allow one to consume more.

13. For more information on surgeries available to "cure" obesity, see L. Wolfe's "Weight Loss Surgery." And for personal accounts of side-effects from women who have undergone weight-loss operations, see a number of the essays in *Shadow on a Tightrope*.

14. For more information on Redux, see Michael D. Lemonick's article, "The New Miracle Drug?" "Just three months after the introduction of Redux, doctors are writing 85,000 prescriptions a week" (Lemonick 40). The potential side-effects of the drug are still being disputed. They can range, however, from "fatigue, diarrhea, vivid dreams,

[and] dry mouth," to the more dangerous possibility of brain damage (which occurred in lab animals) and a form of hypertension "which destroys blood vessels in the lungs and heart" (Lemonick 40). Despite the drawbacks of the drug, a large portion of the medical profession supports its success.

15. The irony must be noted that the "Fat Liberation Manifesto" was published 23 years ago--the same number of years since the FDA supported the last appetite suppressant.

16. In *Such a Pretty Face: Being Fat in America*, Marcia Millman documents the story of repeat offenders--children who every summer are sent to fat camps where they are literally starved into a sleek physique. However, what the organizers of diet camps, crash diets, and all other forms of weight-loss programs have in common is their inability to understand that "the effort to lose weight should be secondary to the effort to understand the meanings of being overweight" (Millman ix). By assuming, as Susie Orbach does in *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, that "every woman wants to be thin" (69), and that fat "is a response to the inequality of the sexes" (5), the biological realities that often govern women's weight gain are ignored in favour of a psychological critique.

17. Perhaps the best known literary example of male fasting as a career appears in Franz Kafka's "The Hunger Artist."

CONCLUSION

Late Capitalism's Counter-Discourse

> A time comes in the history of capitalism when 'its existence is no longer compatible with society.' It cannot feed its slaves. It drives them to revolution in which a proletarian victory is inevitable"
>
> (*Communist Manifesto* 36)

In *The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism* I have offered an historical materialist critique of body transformations that situates the body not only within a number of local and social practices, but also within the drive towards establishing a global, capitalist system. When we analyze "the body" in this larger economic context, we can better understand quests to attain the homogenized ideal of beauty. Indeed, pathological behaviours particular to late capitalism--such as eating disorders, steroid abuse, and the creation of "scalpel slaves"--can be traced back to some "truth" advertised by the beauty, diet, and fitness industries. By boasting that "anybody" can have "any body," the rhetoric of reformation encourages individuals to "imagine the possibilities," and to view their bodies as plastic. Within this schema, the body becomes a commodity. In focusing on cosmetic surgery, bodybuilding, and eating disorders, I have tried to highlight how pathological behaviours can be explained (and understood) when analysed within a capitalist, consumer culture.

One of the implicit arguments in this dissertation is that the physical body mirrors the socioeconomic vulnerabilities/aspirations of the social body. While the nation tightens its belt in pursuit of fiscal responsibility and free-market enterprise, the individual body is similarly encouraged to become "lean and mean," to embody a competitive edge. Government bodies and corporations alike are instructed to reduce their payroll, just as

dieters are taught to reduce their caloric intake. The wide-scale dissemination of the rhetoric of reformation interpellates an entire population, so that we compliantly integrate ourselves into a changing economy. Like the promised post-diet euphoria, this new economy (replete with increased technological capabilities) boasts an improved life for all. But at what cost?

Throughout my study, I have drawn parallels between increased pathologies resulting from body obsessions, and employment insecurities stemming from late capitalism's impulse towards "downsizing," and its grand scale replacement of human workers by machines (a transition not accompanied by an increase in "leisure" time, or a decreased work week). In the face of transnational takeovers, mass layoffs, growing unemployment, and the disappearance of millions of jobs in North America, the need for a sustained feminist critique of capitalism remains paramount. Especially since, as Maria Mies argues in *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, "two thirds of all labour done in the world is done by women" (14). Even more astounding, women "receive only one-tenth of the world income and control only one-hundredth of the means of production in the world" (von Werlhof 177). As transnational corporations seek the cheapest labour and either move their production lines into Third World countries or employ non-unionized workers in the West, women, minorities, and children stand to suffer the greatest exploitation.

However, at a time when "Free enterprise and free market ideology enjoy global hegemony in the current political and economic environment," to argue against the accumulation of large profits in favour of communal well-being "flies in the face of the prevailing common sense" (Aronowitz and DiFazio 343). Yet, while Canada has the highest unemployment rate in decades, the major banks are announcing record profits. Such cultural contradictions (high unemployment juxtaposed with large corporate profits, and increased

focus on individualism juxtaposed with a homogenized beauty ideal) produce a number of "faultlines" that make dissident readings possible. Beauty pursuits are one "faultline" that expose the inextricable link between individual practices and the accumulation of capitalist wealth. Indeed, cosmetic surgery exemplifies how the patient's physical well-being is often ignored in the race for medical profits.

The "new" ideal female physique, with muscular curves on a thin body, that has replaced the merely slim body of the 1960s, can be obtained only through an immense amount of work (and suffering). The "anybody can" rhetoric of the diet and fitness industries masks the amount of unpaid labour necessary to attain/maintain this ideal. *The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism* takes up, in part, this rivalry between biological constraints and technological interventions, and highlights some of the casualties in the warfare with the body. Ultimately, body obsessions are about production, consumption and control, and about maintaining fixed gender roles that continue to privilege men. When read against the backdrop of late capitalism, body obsessions and the microscopic focus on the self can be interpreted as natural responses to an economic climate that embraces privatization trends, a climate that encourages depersonalization.

When I first envisioned *The Politics of Beauty in Late Capitalism*, I imagined concluding with a concrete form of resistance--some practical means of activism--upon which theoretical arguments could build. I wanted to provide a praxis that would, in Teresa Ebert's words, not only focus on trying to interpret "the *existing* relations of production and exploitation," but also on devising methods by which to *change* them (226-27). As a model for activism, I was thinking, in part, of groups such as the National Association to Advance

Fat Acceptance (NAAFA). The political activities of this group currently include lobbying the United States Center for Disease Control to keep records of the number of deaths resulting from weight-loss efforts. NAAFA is also asking for a ban on dangerous diet products, like the one already in place for cigarette advertising, and for "the Surgeon General [to] begin requiring that *all* weight-loss products carry a warning about their probable ineffectiveness" (Poulton 209).

In addition to NAAFA, other organizations are becoming more vocal about the dangers and deceits of the diet industry.[1] These groups provide the kind of counter-discourse necessary to discipline the diet industry, and to dispense with the hunger, desire, and depression that result from body obsessions. But hunger, whether malnourishment, anorexia, or dieting, "has to be recorded 'as a sign of exploitation' in order to become a mobilizing force in politics" (Ellmann 5). NAAFA and other groups are exposing this exploitation.

In my study, the discourse of desperation acts as a viable counter-discourse to the rhetoric of reformation. However, the rhetoric of reformation remains extremely effective because its wide distribution reveals that the beauty, diet, and fitness industries have the support of big business and medical technology. For these industries, access to advertising dollars does not pose a problem. In contrast, NAAFA has been in existence since 1969, yet its lobbying has been relatively ineffective because it lacks "credible" backing. Is a counter-discourse even possible, then, if it must have institutional support to make it credible? Or, by gaining a larger base of support, is it already a part of capitalist hegemonic forces?

I am aware that I have adopted many of Marx's notions of exploitation and applied them to a study of beauty as unpaid labour without specifically addressing class issues. This

is not an omission, but rather an acknowledgement of how successfully beauty pursuits span class lines. The phrase "from lipstick to liposuction" exemplifies the wide economic range of beauty products available. A woman of any class can purchase a tube of lipstick or bottle of nail-polish without undergoing undue economic hardships. Indeed, the staggering success of the beauty, diet, and fitness industries can be attributed in part to the seemingly *class-less* nature of the homogenized ideal. The rhetoric of reformation suggests that *anybody* can achieve the ideal with a little willpower--anybody, from any neighbourhood.

Just as capitalism drops into "marginalized neighborhoods" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 25) searching for fresh images by which to stimulate consumer desire, oppositional movements to capitalism and to increased globalization efforts often develop into marketing successes of their own when they become popular. Environmentalism is a case in point. Books, t-shirts, and other commodities promoting a "green" existence have captured a healthy corner of the market. Any counter-discourses, especially those that most effectively critique continuing exploitative systems of power in late capitalism, are eventually subsumed and regurgitated to exact a profit. Yet we must continue to question exploitative economic relations, and actively seek to understand how ideologies erase the unpaid labour of workers "in leisure," as well as the exploitation of their surplus labour.

I agree with Bordo's statement that the least we can do is become better versed in systemic oppression. She writes: "in our present culture of mystification--a culture which continually pulls us away from systemic understanding and inclines us toward constructions that emphasize individual freedom, choice, power, ability--simply becoming more conscious is a tremendous achievement" (*Unbearable* 30). Becoming "more conscious" means looking at cosmetic surgery *not* as a service available to individuals who *choose* to improve their

appearance, but as one that destructively promotes ageism (thereby making itself necessary). Similarly, dieting products and services promote fat oppression. To become "more conscious" is to recognize that ageism and fat oppression discriminate against the "gross" body, and encourage it to become "technologized."

Becoming "more conscious" of our unpaid labour, for example, is a good place to start. Are we using our "leisure hours" for ourselves, or are we being manipulated to support the very systems that exploit us? Focusing on unpaid labour as a form of exploitation firmly places the body within a critique of economic systems. Such a move elides a ludic feminist analysis that fetishizes pleasure and deals with matters of sexuality and gender in ways that are divorced from "the operation of socioeconomic arrangements" (Ebert 14). To move to an understanding of the body as a material body with daily realities, as a working body rather than as a theoretical *construct*, involves addressing the body that labours, eats, sleeps, suffers illnesses, enjoys pleasures, etc.

Becoming "more conscious" is not the grand scale resistance I once imagined possible, yet it is resistance nonetheless. For we do not reject totalizing systems by ourselves; we voice our concerns and opinions to our friends, families, students, and colleagues. In a culture that promotes the quick-fix and instant gratification, we need "a determinedly sceptical attitude toward the routes of seeming liberation and pleasure offered by our culture" (Bordo, *Unbearable* 184). These are the very routes, Ebert would argue, that work to reinscribe patriarchal and capitalist oppression. To recognize that beauty ideals are promoted *for profit* involves understanding that beauty is big business. Such a recognition allows us to "imagine the possibilities" for countering hegemonic discourses.

Without a doubt, we are in need of social activism that further challenges hegemonic modes of representation. However, my intent from the start of this study has been to provide examples of a literary revolution that is "writing back" against destructive beauty ideals through strategies characterised by Richard Terdiman as "counter-discourses." Contemporary writers are finding new methods of representation that redirect the spotlight of beauty away from individuals and onto the industries that promote them. In so doing, these writers illustrate both the psychical and physical anguish involved in body transformations, and thereby successfully present a counter-discourse to the rhetoric of reformation. Whether we analyze fictional representations of beauty pursuits, or explore autobiographical renderings of psychic anguish, the stark depictions of self-hatred and unpaid labour reveal a tragic and all-too-familiar narrative of profound dissatisfaction with the gross body, coupled with an unquestioned belief in technological possibilities.

The autobiographical segments of Poulton's *No Fat Chicks*, for example, clearly portray a counter-discourse at work. In the chronicle of her past life of "dieting," she describes the years of pain and anguish surrounding her blind determination to lose weight. "There was nothing funny about the physical and psychological privations I suffered," she writes, "or the awful lifelong struggle" to achieve a thinner physique (9-10). Similarly, Fussell's lengthy insights into a bodybuilder's self-abuse signify the degree of dedication and pain involved in becoming a professional bodybuilder. Whereas Poulton never gets thin enough, Fussell never achieves the physical bulk he desires. Both cases illustrate the psychic anguish surrounding attempts to alter the biological realities of individual bodies.

In addition, through parodic engagements with medical technology, writers such as Weldon and D'Amato critique societal fixations with so-called surgical solutions. Thus in

Beauty, D'Amato describes the outcome of a patient whose artificial face slowly disintegrates as the synthetic skin substitute breaks down:

> here were tiny networks of cracks running around the holes in her face, like ridges in a rotting pumpkin. And it seemed to be a weird mottled gray color. Her face definitely seemed smaller [from shrinkage].... And there wasn't any skin underneath. Just flesh that dried and wrinkled. (347)

The horrifying nature of this description forces readers to interrogate their fantasies for technological improvement.

It might be argued that D'Amato, as a writer of thrillers, is simply exploiting cosmetic surgery for its horror potential, and is therefore not as socially critical as Weldon. However, his portrayal of the dangers inherent in technological advancements in the beauty field nonetheless provide the potential for a counter discourse. Indeed, placing the surgical procedures in *Beauty* beside Orlan's performances provides a strong counter-discourse to fantasies of completion.

Whether autobiographical accounts or fictional representations, all of my primary texts link concerns about appearance to the mass consumption of late capitalism and recognise the rivalry between the biological "realities" of bodies and their technological "possibilities." They also provide abundant examples of the discourse of desperation that counter the myths inherent in the rhetoric of reformation. For example, the "fat woman" of Leon Rooke's novel ends up imprisoned in her bedroom, held captive by her husband who intends to set her free only *after* her body becomes "acceptable" (ie. slim). At the other end of the continuum, the anorexics compete in a slow burn to the finish line--utter freedom from bodily determination, represented by death. Meanwhile, Atwood's protagonist in *Lady*

Oracle ingests diet pills and laxatives to speed towards the "instant gratification" promised by the diet industry. Fussell and his bodybuilding cohorts take turns lunging for the bathroom when their bodies reject their last food binge. Similarly, Esther Sussman, the protagonist of Weldon's *The Fat Woman's Joke*, often vomits after binging on an offending mixture of food.

The excess of self-abuse chronicled in much contemporary writing cannot be ignored. The vomiting, exercising, dieting, starving, and self-loathing bring us face to face with a common problem: bodies in late capitalism suffer from consumption disorders. Whether through purchasing products and/or services, consumers suffer from an excess of "choice" and bodily expectations that have created a diseased environment of somatic absorption. Orlan's move towards re-presenting the body as a mere vehicle for alterations (her face--a detachable mask) signals profound anxieties in how individuals live with/in their bodies. As Seltzer argues in *Bodies and Machines*, "the notion of consumption depends upon a condensation of bodily and economic states, of the individual and social body" (152). That contemporary culture can have the vast discrepancy between anorexia and obesity signals that the "condensation" is of a more troubled nature.

As capitalism continues its assault on the individual body, I believe we will see an increase in literary representations of the psychic anguish created when culturally produced desires are opposed by the realities of the material body. Artists, who often express concern about technological advancement, will no doubt continue to post early warning signs about the dangers inherent in a belief system too grounded in the profit-driven agenda of corporate business. We would do well to pay heed to these signs.

Notes

1. For a list of other groups see *No Fat Chicks*, 209.

Works Cited

Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990.

Adams, Parveen. *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Difference*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Adbusters: Journal of the Mental Environment. Winter 1996.

Adorno, Theodor. *The Culture Industry*. Ed. J.M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 1991.

Andersen, Arnold E. Ed. *Males with Eating Disorders. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990.*

Architecture of Doom. US 1991. Directed by Peter Cohen.

Aronowitz, Stanley and William DiFazio. *The Jobless Future: Sci-Tech and the Dogma of Work*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Artforum. Review by Keith Seward. October 1993. 90-91

Asken, Saul, M.D. *Liposuction Surgery and Autologous Fat Transplantation*. Norwald, Connecticut: Appleton & Lange, 1988.

Attridge, Derek. *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Edible Woman*. Toronto: McClelland & Steward, 1994 [1969].

---. *Lady Oracle*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984 [1976].

Aycock, Alan. "The Confession of the Flesh: Disciplinary Gaze in Casual Bodybuilding." *Play and Culture*. 5: 1992, 338-357.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Balsamo, Anne. "On the Cutting Edge: Cosmetic Surgery and the Technological Production of the Gendered Body." *Camera Obscura* 28, 1992. 205-237.

---. *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996.

Banner, Lois W. *American Beauty*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Barthel, Diane. *Putting on Appearances: Gender and Advertising*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1988.

Barthes, Roland. *The Fashion System*. Trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

Bartky, Sandra Lee. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Battersby, James L. *Reason and the Nature of Texts*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.

Baudrillard, Jean. "Consumer Society." *Selected Writings*. Ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Bech-Gernsheim, Elisabeth. "From the Pill to Test-Tube Babies: New Options, New Pressures in Reproductive Behavior." *Healing Technologies: Feminist Perspectives*. Eds. Kathryn Strother Ratcliff et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989. 23-40.

Bell, Daniel. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1973.

Bell, Rudolph M. *Holy Anorexia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books, 1972.

Berman, Ruth. "From Aristotle's Dualism to Materialist Dialectics: Feminist Transformation of Science and Society." *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. Eds. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990. 224-255.

Bidart, Frank. *The Book of the Body*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.

Bina, Cyrus, Laurie Clements, and Chuck Davis. Eds. *Beyond Survival: Wage Labor in the Late Twentieth Century*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.

Binswanger, Ludwig. "The Case of Ellen West: An Anthropological-Clinical Study." Trans. Werner M. Mendel and Joseph Lyons. *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*. Eds. Rollo May, Ernest Angel, and Henri F. Ellenberger. New York, Basic Books, Inc., [1944] 1958.

Bird, Liz and Jo Eliot. "*The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*: (Fay Weldon--Ted Whitehead)." *British Television Drama in the 1980s*. Ed. George W. Brandt, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1993. 214-233.

Blouin, Arthur G. and Gary S. Goldfield. "Body Image and Steroid Use in Male Bodybuilders." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. 18:2. 1995, 159-196.

Boas, Max and Steve Chain. *Big Mac: The Unauthorized Story of McDonald's*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1976.

Boland, Eavan. *Introducing Eavan Boland*. Princeton, New Jersey: The Ontario Review Press, 1981.

Bolin, Ann. "Vandalized Vanity: Feminine Physiques Betrayed and Portrayed." *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture*

and Text. Eds. Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe. New York: SUNY Press, 1992. 79-99.

Bordo, Susan. "Reading the Male Body." *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures*. Ed. Laurence Goldstein. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. 265-306.

---. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Bruch, Hilde. *Eating Disorders*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

---. *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease*. Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of* "Sex." New York and London: Routledge, 1993.

---. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Bynum, Caroline. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Calder, Alison. "Imagine a Picture." *Breathing Fire: Canada's New Poets*. Eds. Lorna Crozier and Patrick Lane. Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1995. 43.

Callinicos, Alex. *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

Cameron, Elspeth. "Famininity, or Parody of Autonomy: Anorexia Nervosa and *The Edible Woman*." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20:2 (Summer), 1985. 45-69.

Carey, Peter. *The Fat Man in History*. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1974.

Caskey, Noelle. "Interpreting Anorexia Nervosa." *The Female body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*. Ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Casper, Regina C. "On the Emergence of Bulimia Nervosa as a Syndrome: A Historical View." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 2:3 (Spring) 1983. 3-16.

Chapkis, Wendy. *Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance*. Boston: South End Press, 1986.

Chernin, Kim. *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness*. New York and London: Harper & Row, 1981.

Chisholm, Patricia. "The Body Builders." *Macleans*. July 8, 1996. 36-41.

Clark, Kenneth. *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956.

Claude-Pierre, Peggy. *The Secret Language of Eating Disorders: The Revolutionary New Approach to Understanding and Curing Anorexia and Bulimia*. Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1997.

Coward, Rosalind. *Female Desires: How They Are Sought, Bought and Packaged*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1985.

Craik, Jennifer. *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*. New York and London: Routledge, 1994.

Crews, Harry. *Body*. New York: Poseiden Press, 1990.

Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

Dallery, Arleen B. "The Politics of Writing (the) Body: *Écriture Féminine*." *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. Eds. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992. 52-67.

D'Amato, Brian. *Beauty*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1992.

Davis, Kathy. "Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty." *Hypatia* 6:2 (Summer 1991): 21-43.

---. *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. New York and London: Routledge, 1995.

de Courtivron, Isabelle. *Violette Leduc*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985.

de Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-Facement." *MLN* 94. 1979, 919-30.

Diamond, Nicky. "Thin is the Feminist Issue." *Feminist Review*, 19. March 1985. 45- 64.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

Dull, Diana and Candace West. "Accounting for Cosmetic Surgery: The Accomplishment of Gender." *Social Problems*, 38:1, February 1991. 54-70.

Dutton, Kenneth R. *The Perfectible Body: The Western Ideal of Male Physical Development*. New York: Continuum, 1995.

Ebert, Teresa L. *Ludic Feminism and After: Postmodernism, Desire, and Labor in Late Capitalism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Ellman, Maud. *The Hunger Artist: Starving, Writing & Imprisonment*. London: Virago Press, 1993.

Fallon, April. "Culture in the Mirror: Sociocultural Determinants of Body Image." *Body Images: Development, Deviance, and Change*. New York: Guilford Press, 1990. 80-109.

Faludi, Susan. *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Fee, Margery. *The Fat Lady Dances: Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1993.

Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989.

Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex*. New York: William Morrow, 1970.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vitage Books, 1979.

Freedman, Rita. *Beauty Bound*. Lexington, Massachussetts: Lexington Books, 1986.

Freespirit, Judy, and Aldebaran. "Fat Liberation Manifesto." *Shadow on a Tightrope: Writings by Women on Fat Oppression*. Eds. Lisa Schoenfielder and Barb Wieser. Iowa City: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1983. 52-53.

Freud, Sigmund. *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*. London: Tavistock. 1966.

Frisby, David and Derek Sayer. *Society*. London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1986.

Fussell, Samuel Wilson. "Bodybuilder Americanus." *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures*. Ed. Laurence Goldstein. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. 43-60.

---. *Muscle: Confessions of an Unlikely Bodybuilder*. New York: Poseidon Press, 1991.

Glück, Louise. *Descending Figure*. New York: Ecco Press, 1980.

Gorn, Elliot J. *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Grealy, Lucy. *Autobiography of a Face*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Grosz, Elizabeth. "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason." *Feminist Epistemologies*. Ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter. New York: Routledge, 1993. 187-215.

---. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Guiora, A.Z. "Dysorexia: A Psychopathological Study of Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia." *American Journal of Psychiatry, 124. 1967. 391-393.*

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Hartsock, Nancy. "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Ed. Linda J. Nicholson. New York: Routledge, 1990. 157-175.

---. *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1995.

Hebert, Ann Marie. "ReWriting the Feminine Script: Fay Weldon's Wicked Laughter." *Critical Matrix: The Princeton Journal of Women, Gender, and Culture*. 7:1, 1993. 21-40.

Heidi, Gloria and James Earp. *New Beginnings: Cosmetic Surgery for Men and Women*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. "Woman's Autobiographical Writings: New Forms." *Modern Selves: Essays on Modern British and American Autobiography*. Ed. Philip Dodd. London: Frank Cass, 1986. 14-28.

Helwig, Maggie. "A Certain Hunger: The Body Language of Anorexia." *This Magazine*. 22:7, February 1989. 17-21.

Hopwood, Catherine. "My Discourse/My-Self: Therapy as Possibility (for Women Who Eat Compulsively)." *Feminist Review*, 49. (Spring 1995). 66-82.

Hull, Suzanne W. *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640*. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982.

Hutcheon, Linda. Afterword. *The Edible Woman*. By Margaret Atwood. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1994. 313-319.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books. 1976.

Iser, Wolfgang. "Representation: A Performative Act." *The Aims of Representation: Subject/Text/History*. Ed. Murray Krieger. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. 217-232.

Jameson, Frederic. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

Johnson, Hillary. *Physical Culture*. New York: Poseidon Press, 1989.

Kafka, Franz. "The Hunger Artist." *The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Stories*. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken Books, 1961. 243-256.

Katz, Pamela. "They Should Have Called It *She-Angel*." *Fay Weldon's Wicked Fictions*. Ed. Regina Barreca. Hanover and London: University Press of New England. 1994. 114-132.

Kimmel, Michael S. "Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the Male Body, 1832-1920." *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures*. Ed. Laurence Goldstein. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. 12-41.

Klein, Alan M. *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction*. New York: SUNY Press, 1993.

Kuhn, Annette. "The Body and Cinema: Some Problems for Feminism." *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*. Ed. Susan Sheridan. London: Verso, 1988. 11-23.

Kunish, Judith R. "Electronic Fetal Monitors: Marketing Forces and the Resulting Controversy." *Healing Technologies: Feminist Perspectives*. Eds. Kathryn Strother Ratcliff et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989. 41-60.

Lakoff, Robin Tolmach and Raquel L. Scherr. *Face Value: The Politics of Beauty*. Boston and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Lawrence, M. *The Anorexic Experience*. London: Women's Press, 1984.

Leduc, Violette. *La Bâtarde: An Autobiography*. Trans. Derek Coltman. 1965; rpt. London: Virago, 1985.

Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*. Trans. Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

Lemonick, Michael D. "The New Miracle Drug?" *Time* 23 Sept. 1996: 38-45.

Léolo. Canada 1993. Directed by Jean-Claude Lauzon.

Lovelace, Carey. "Orlan: Offensive Acts." *Performing Arts Journal 49*, 1995. 13-25.

Lowe, Donald M. *The Body in Late Capitalist USA*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.

MacCannell, Dean and Juliet Flower MacCannell. "The Beauty System." *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*. Eds. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse. New York and London: Methuen, 1987. 206-38.

MacInnis, Beth. "Fat Oppression." *Consuming Passions: Feminist Approaches to Weight Preoccupation and Eating Disorders*. Eds. Catrina Brown and Karin Jasper. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1993. 69-79.

MacSween, Morag. *Anorexic Bodies: A Feminist and Sociological Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Mahoney, Rosemary. "Face Value." *Elle*. Sept. 1994. 10:1. 138-144.

Mansfield, Alan and Barbara McGinn. "Pumping Irony: The Muscular and the Feminine." *Body Matters: Essays on the Sociology of the Body*. Eds. Sue Scott and David Morgan. London: The Falmer Press, 1993. 49-68.

Marwick, Arthur. *Beauty in History: Society, Politics and Personal Appearance c. 1500 to the Present*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1988.

Marx, Karl. *Capital*. [1889] Ed. and Intro. David McLellan. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

---. *Critique of the Gotha Program*. New York: International Publishers, 1966.

---. *Theories of Surplus Value*. Trans. G.A. Bonner and Emile Burns. New York: International Publishers, 1952.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology*. In *Collected Works*. Vol. 5. New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Mayer, Vivian. Foreword. *Shadow on a Tightrope: Writings by Women on Fat Oppression*. By Lisa Schoenfielder and Barb Wieser, eds. Iowa City: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1983. ix-xvii.

McClellan, Jim. "Written on the Body." *HQ*. Sep/Oct 1994. 96-99.

McKinstry, Susan Jaret. "Fay Weldon's *Life and Loves of a She-Devil*: The Speaking Body." *Fay Weldon's Wicked Fictions*. Ed. Regina Barreca. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1994. 104-113.

McMaster, Juliet. *Dickens the Designer*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1987.

McNeil, Maureen. "Reproductive Technologies: A New Terrain for the Sociology of Technology." *The New Reproductive Technologies*. Eds. Maureen McNeil, Ian Varcoe and Steven Yearley. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. 1-26.

Michie, Helena. *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Mickalide, Angela D. "Sociocultural Factors Influencing Weight Among Males." *Males with Eating Disorders*. Ed. Arnold E. Andersen. New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers. 1990. 30-39.

Mies, Maria. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Zed Books, 1986.

Millman, Marcia. *Such a Pretty Face: Being Fat in America*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980.

Morgan, Kathryn Pauly. "Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies." *Hypatia* 6:3 (Fall 1991): 25-53.

Morini, Simona. *Body Sculpture: Plastic Surgery From Head to Toe*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1972.

Morse, Margaret. "Artemis Aging: Exercise and the Female Body on Video." *Discourse* 10:1. (Fall-Winter), 1987-1988. 20--53.

Moynahan, Paula A. *Cosmetic Surgery For Women: A Revolutionary Approach to Image Enhancement*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1988.

Muscle & Fitness. December 1994.

Neuman, Shirley. "An appearance walking in a forest the sexes burn": Autobiography and the Construction of the Feminine Body." *Signature* 2 (1989). 1-26.

Nicholson, Mervyn. "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others." *Mosaic* 20:3 (Summer), 1987. 37-55.

Norman, Jan. "Boomers Fear Job Prospects Are Skin Deep." *Edmonton Journal* 23 mar. 1997: B5.

Norris, Miranda. "This Woman Has Surgery to Distort Her Face." *Marie Claire Health & Beauty*. Spring 1996. Issue #7. 38-40.

Orbach, Susie. *Fat is a Feminist Issue: The Anti-Diet Guide to Permanent Weight Loss*. New York: Berkley Books, 1978.

---. *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age*. London: Faber & Faber, 1986.

Pacteau, Francette. *The Symptom of Beauty*. London: Reaktion Books, 1994.

Pirruccello, Frank W. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery of the Face: Cosmetic Surgery*. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1981.

Poulton, Terry. *No Fat Chicks: How Women Are Brainwashed to Hate Their Bodies and Spend Their Money*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1996.

Probyn, Elspeth. "The Anorexic Body." *Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America*. Eds. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker. Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1987. 201-211.

Pumping Iron II--The Women. US 1985. Directed by George Butler; British distributor Blue Dolphin.

Randall, Aaron J., Stephen F. Hall and Mary F. Rogers. "Masculinity on Stage: Competitive Male Bodybuilders." *Studies in Popular Culture*. 14:2, 1992. 57-69.

Reardon, James J. and Judi McMahon. *Plastic Surgery for Men: The Complete Illustrated Guide By One of America's Most Creative Plastic Surgeons*. New York: Everest House Publishers, 1981.

Reed, Kit. "The Food Farm." *Women of Wonder: Science Fiction Stories By Women About Women*. Ed. Pamela Sargent. New York: Vintage Books, 1975.

Reiter, Ester. *Making Fast Food: From the Frying Pan into the Fryer*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, [1991] 1996.

Rifkin, Jeremy. *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*. New York: G.P. Putnum Sons, 1995.

Ritzer, George. *The McDonaldization of Society: Investigation Into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*. London, New Delhi: Pine Forge Press, 1993.

Rivière, Joan. "Womanliness as a Masquerade." *The Formation of Fantasy*. Eds. Victor Burgin, James Donald & Cora Kaplan. London: Methuen, 1986. 35-44.

Rogers, Pat. "Fat is a Fictional Issue: The Novel and the Rise of Weight-Watching." *Literature & Medicine During the Eighteenth Century*. Eds. Marie Mulvey Roberts and Roy Porter. 1993. 168-187.

Rooke, Leon. *Fat Woman*. Canada: Oberon Press, 1980.

Rose, Barbara. "Is It Art?: Orlan and the Transgressive Act." *Art in America*. Vol. 81, Feb. 1983: 82-82, +125.

Rosenthal, Sylvia. *Cosmetic Surgery: A Consumer's Guide*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1977.

Sayer, Derek. *Marx's Method: Ideology, Science & Critique in Capital*. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1979.

"Scalpel Slaves Just Can't Quit." *Newsweek*. Jan. 11, 1988: 58-59.

Schor, Juliet B. *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*. New York: Basic Books, 1991.

Schulze, Laurie. "On the Muscle." *Fabrications, Costume and the Female Body*. Eds. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog. New York and London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1990. 59-78.

Schwartz, Hillel. *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies and Fat*. New York: The Free Press, 1986.

Scott, Byron T. *How To Remodel Your Body*. Illinois: Greatlakes Publishing Press, 1975.

Seltzer, Mark. *Bodies and Machines*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.

Silverman, Joseph A. "Anorexia Nervosa in the Male: Early Historic Cases." *Males With Eating Disorders*. Ed. Arnold E. Andersen. New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1990. 3-8.

Simpson, Mark. *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Sinfield, Alan. *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation*. Bloomington and Indianopolis: Indiana UP, 1987.

Spelman, Elizabeth V. "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views." *Feminist Studies*. Vol. 8:1 (Spring 1982). 109-131.

Spitzack, Carole. *Confessing Excess: Women and the Politics of Body Reduction*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990.

---. "The Confession Mirror: Plastic Images for Surgery." *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*. 12:1-2, 1988. 38-50.

Spring, Justin. "Head to Toe." *Artforum*. Feb. 1992. 20-21.

Sprinker, Michael. "Fictions of the Self: the End of Autobiography." *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Ed. James Olney. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 321-42.

Stanworth, M. Ed. *Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood and Medicine*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

Stein, David M. and William Laakso. "Bulimia: A Historical Perspective." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. 7:2, 201-210.

Strother Ratcliffe, Kathryn. Introduction. *Healing Technologies: Feminist Perspectives*. Eds. Kathryn Strother Ratcliff et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989. 1-14.

Strother Ratcliffe, Kathryn. *Healing Technologies: Feminist Perspectives*. Eds. Kathryn Strother Ratcliff et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989.

Székely, Eva. *Never Too Thin*. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1988.

Terdiman, Richard. *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Texas Monthly. April 1986: 176.

---. "Male Enhancement Surgery." March 1997. 192.

Thompson, Becky W. *A Hunger So Wide and So Deep: A Multi-Racial View of Women's Eating Problems*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

Urla, Jacqueline and Alan C. Swedlund. "The Anthropometry of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture." *Deviant Bodies*. Eds. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995. 277-313.

von Werlhof, Claudia. "The Proletarian is Dead: Long Live the Housewife!" *Women: The Last Colony*. Eds. Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof. London: Zed Books, 1988. 168-181.

Wacquant, Loïc J.D. "Pugs at Work: Bodily Capital and Bodily Labour Among Professional Boxers." *Body & Society*. 1:1. March 1995(a). 65-93.

---. "Review Article: Why Men Desire Muscles." *Body & Society*. 1:1. March 1995(b). 163-179.

Wagner, J. Kurt, and Gerald Imber. *Beauty By Design: A Complete Look At Cosmetic Surgery*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1979.

Wajcman, Judy. *Feminism Confronts Technology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Walker, Nancy A. "Witch Weldon: Fay Weldon's Use of the Fairy Tale Tradition." *Fay Weldon's Wicked Fictions*. Ed. Regina Barreca. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1994. 7-20.

Weider, Ben. *Bodybuilding: The Weider Approach*. Chicago: Contemporary Books, Inc., 1981.

Weimann, Robert. "History, Appropriation, and the Uses of Representation in Modern Narrative." *The Aims of Representation: Subject/Text/History*. Ed. Murray Krieger. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. 175-214.

Weldon, Fay. *The Fat Woman's Joke*. London: MacGibbon & Kee Limited, 1967.

---. *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*. Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1983.

Williams, Raymond. *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays*. London: Verso Editions, 1980.

Williamson, Judith. *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising.* London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1983.

Winkler, Mary G. "Model Women." *The Good Body: Asceticism in Contemporary Culture.* Eds. Mary G. Winkler and Letha B. Cole. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994. 215-231.

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth.* Toronto: Vintage Books, 1991.

Wolfe, Louise. "Weight Loss Surgery." *Shadow on a Tightrope: Writings by Women on Fat Oppression.* Ed. L. Schoenfielder and B. Wieser. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Press, 1983. 162-166.

Wooley, O. Wayne and Susan Wooley. "The Beverly Hills Eating Disorder: The Mass Marketing of Anorexia Nervosa." *International Journal of Eating Disorders.* 1:3. Spring 1982, 57-69.

Working Women. July 1994, 28.

Wright, Barbara Drygulski. Second Introduction. *Healing Technologies: Feminist Perspectives.* Eds. Kathryn Strother Ratcliff et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989.